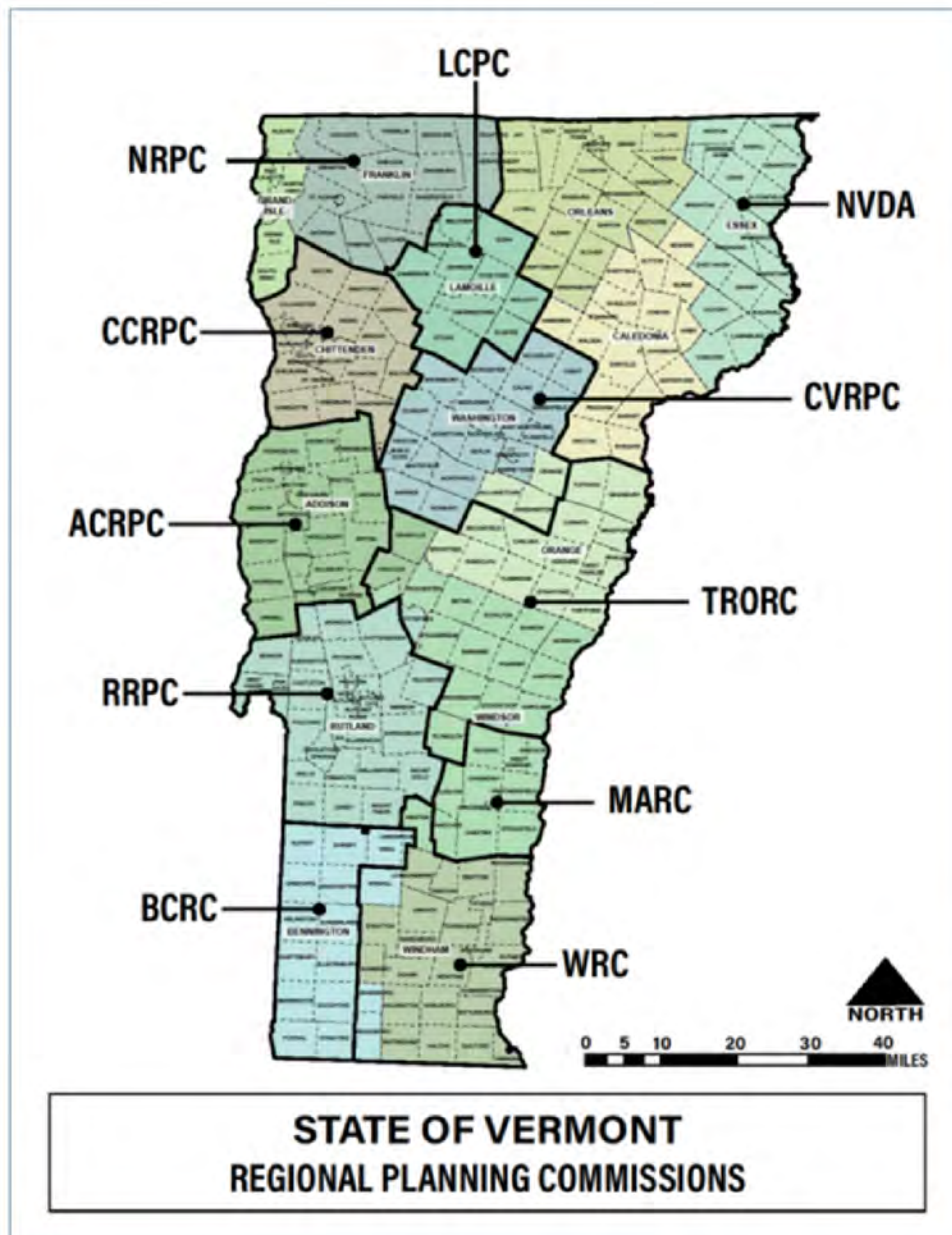




Fiscal Year 2023
ANNUAL REPORT



September 30, 2023

Table of Contents

Addison County Regional Planning Commission	1
Bennington County Regional Commission	13
Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission	36
Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission	51
Lamoille County Planning Commission	66
Mount Ascutney Regional Planning Commission	85
Northwest Regional Planning Commission	93
Northeastern Vermont Development Association	105
Rutland Regional Planning Commission	117
Two Rivers-Ottawquechee Regional Commission	127
Windham Regional Commission	134

This annual report is also available in an interactive website at:
<https://vapda-report-vapda.hub.arcgis.com/>

Addison County Regional Planning Commission

FY 2023 Annual Report

The Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) serves 21 municipalities within Addison County. ACRPC assists towns in the Addison Region (the “Region”) to help provide effective local government and works cooperatively with them to address statewide, regional and local issues.

Municipalities choose to be members of ACRPC. Each municipality’s legislative body appoints 1, 2 or 3 Commissioners, depending upon the population of the municipality, to represent the municipality’s interest on ACRPC’s Board. Additionally, ACRPC’s Board accommodates up to six citizen-interest commissioners who represent other regional interests such as business and industry, natural resources, agriculture and social services. ACRPC delegates a significant portion of its work to six (6) sub-committees, which review various aspects of the Commission’s business. Commissioners serve on these committees and make recommendations for action to the full Commission. All of ACRPC’s committees are advisory. Only the full Commission has the authority to make decisions to bind ACRPC. Eight highly qualified staff with more than 100 years of combined professional experience provide support to the Commission and its committees and execute the Commission’s work program.



PLANNING & ZONING

RPCs act as cost-effective professional planning staff for many of Vermont's municipalities. Of the 21 towns served by ACRPC, only Middlebury employs a full-time planner. All other communities rely on volunteer planning commissions aided and supplemented by ACRPC's staff or outside consultants. ACRPC's work in recent years has focused on improving town plans and local permitting through education and enhanced consultations (on-site training), modernizing bylaws, facilitating transition to Development Review Boards and implementing new requirements for economic development, flood resiliency planning and forest block and habitat connector mapping and policy. Current and clear plans and bylaws are essential to ensure a smooth state and local permitting process. This work is supported through a combination of Federal, State and Local funding sources. All technical assistance provided this year is shown on the "At Work" map; highlights include:

- Continued working with the towns of Orwell and Vergennes on 2022 MPG applications. Orwell is working on a plan update with a focus on the Village Center and Vergennes is developing a Public Art Master Plan for the city. Both projects are completed. Assisted Ferrisburgh and Waltham in applying for 2023 MPG's and currently working on Waltham's Town Plan update. Ferrisburgh received a 2023 MPG grant for a trail's masterplan.
- Continued working with the towns of Bristol, Lincoln and Shoreham on their Bylaw Modernization grants. ACRPC serves as a technical consultant for all of these projects.
- ACRPC provided technical support to all Zoning Administrators within the Region.
- ACRPC held several Roles and Responsibilities trainings for local Planning Commissions.
- ACRPC conducted municipal consultations in Addison, Goshen, Ferrisburgh, Salisbury and Cornwall.
- ACRPC provided technical support to Monkton and Cornwall for Village Center Designation applications.
- In Middlebury, New Haven and Vergennes, ACRPC continued to serve as the Municipal Project Manager on several community infrastructure projects creating sidewalks, shared use paths or bike routes. In Middlebury, the sidewalk/path ties neighborhoods and industrial areas to downtown Middlebury, In Vergennes the sidewalk ties the Otter Creek Basin with downtown Vergennes and the Tri-town Bike Loop provides biking connections between our communities.

RPCs also coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan, and related studies. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors.

- ACRPC finished the Population and Housing section update for the regional plan in the previous year. This year the housing committee focused on creating a survey of housing needs for the Region.
- ACRPC also began working on the Economic Development section of the plan. It intends to feed the Regional Economic Development data developed in the CEDS process (See Economic Development below) into the Addison County Regional Plan and the Plan for the Economic Development Corporation.
- Began working to update the Natural Resource and Childcare sections of the Regional Plan

- Worked with the communities of Vergennes and Ferrisburgh to help them resolve issues surrounding shared municipal fire services.
- Participated in a regional health equity grant
 - Performed research on international health equity materials and examples
 - Helped draft a Health Equity toolkit and survey



BROWNFIELDS

Vermont RPCs have sought and been awarded over 10 million dollars for this economic development initiative. RPCs have performed environmental site assessments on brownfield locations throughout the state. Environmental site assessments allow properties, and formerly degraded properties, to be sold, remediated (if needed), developed or re-developed in ways that benefit the local and state economy, create or protect jobs and increase housing opportunities.

- Prior to 2022, ACRPC had not participated in Brownfields work because it lacked funding. Last year, ACRPC secured a \$500,000 Community Wide Assessment (CWA) grant from the EPA.
- ACRPC has been working with a subcontractor to implement the CWA brownfields grant through work on the following:
 - i. Middlebury Maverick Station: completed Phase I ESA and BRELLA enrollment prior to the Town of Middlebury purchase of the property, beginning Phase II ESA and Regulated Building Materials Survey

- ii. Otter Creek Childcare Center in Middlebury: Completed Phase I ESA & Regulated Building Materials Survey prior to expansion
- iii. Vergennes Opera House: Completed Regulated Building Materials Survey prior to elevator-access installation
- iv. Addison School: Currently preparing for a Phase I ESA and Regulated Building Materials Survey



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with solid planning functions. RPCs work with towns and in strong partnership with Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) to this end in a number of ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont to achieve long term economic gain.

- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy - ACRPC continues to work jointly with the Addison County Economic Development Corporation to create an EDA Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the region. ACRPC/ACEDC and partners completed and the EPA approved a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy “CEDS” for the Region.

- ACRPC also worked with ACEDC to create a list of important planning and economic development projects within the region and supported several grant applications for local businesses.



TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Through contracts with the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), RPCs coordinate the federally funded Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort provides a statewide framework for public involvement in planning the improvements to Vermont's transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TAC). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the State's transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state and federal transportation network advancement. RPCs help fulfill five transportation planning objectives. The Objectives and ACRPC's work under each are listed below.

- Led 13 coordination activities between VTrans and interested Addison County parties, including:
 - ACRPC Transportation Advisory Committee
 - Addison County Committee on the Older Adults and People with Disabilities
 - Tri Valley Transit Board of Directors (Chair), Finance Committee, Nominating Committee and Addison Regional Operating Committee (Chair)
 - Walk Bike Council of Addison County
 - Road Foremen meetings
 - Local Concerns meetings on various topics
- Initiated culvert inventories in six communities
- Assisted sixteen towns in preparing grant applications to VTrans
- Coordinated the Triangle Bike Loop between seven towns for way-finding signs
- Oversaw five municipal planning studies (4 TAC grants, plus a New Haven scoping study)

- Conducted 39 data collection activities on behalf of towns and VTrans (Speed counts, bike, ped and park and ride counts)
- Assisted with a Planning and Environment Linkages Study on reducing truck traffic in downtown Vergennes.
- Created a tool for towns to inventory road signs



EMERGENCY PLANNING & RESPONSE

RPCs play key roles in the mitigation and preparedness phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont's Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, VTrans, and the Agency of Natural Resources. RPCs provide direct staff to the State Emergency Operations Center, administrative support to the Local Emergency Planning Committees, and coordination among responders and planners throughout the State's four Public Safety Districts. RPC's also assist with updating floodplain bylaws, creating FEMA-qualified hazard mitigation plans, coordinating updates to municipal emergency plans and providing as needed assistance in special circumstances and declared disasters.

- All 21 municipal Local Emergency Management Plans (LEMPs) completed and submitted
- One new local Emergency Management Director recruited and trained
- RPC staff trained and certified to work as local liaisons and in roles at the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC)
- Wrote and managed annual EMPG grant (\$53,100)
- Implemented 2 Flood Resilient Communities Fund grants (\$106,000), 1 Building Resilient Infrastructures and Communities grant (\$30000).

- Applied for Food Resilient Communities Fund grants and Building Resilient Infrastructures and Communities grants.
- Worked on Local Hazard Mitigation Plans for the towns of Panton and Leicester; participated in an update of Middlebury's LHMP.
- Organized quarterly meetings of the Addison County Regional Emergency Management Committee (REMC).

MAPPING

RPCs provide municipalities, state agencies and regional groups with mapping and data analysis services in support of their projects.

- ACRPC's mapping program supports nearly every planning function it performs. Every municipal plan, enhanced energy plan or zoning bylaw created contains maps produced by ACRPC.
- ACRPC created new and updated existing maps for town plan updates in the town of Ripton, and provided technical support for Monkton and Cornwall on village center designation applications.
- ACRPC continued to support the data gathering efforts its transportation program is undertaking to map hydrologically connected roadways within the Region.
- ACRPC created interactive online GIS maps and dashboards for the Addison County Riverwatch Collaborative, Vermont Coverts, the Addison County Economic Development Corporation, and the Western Central Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Program.
- ACRPC used spatial analysis and created map products to support Maple Broadband's high-level design and planning efforts (see Special Projects).
- ACRPC developed or updated regional databases of municipal facilities, transportation networks, and natural resources (e.g, zoning, state designations, trails, culverts, etc).

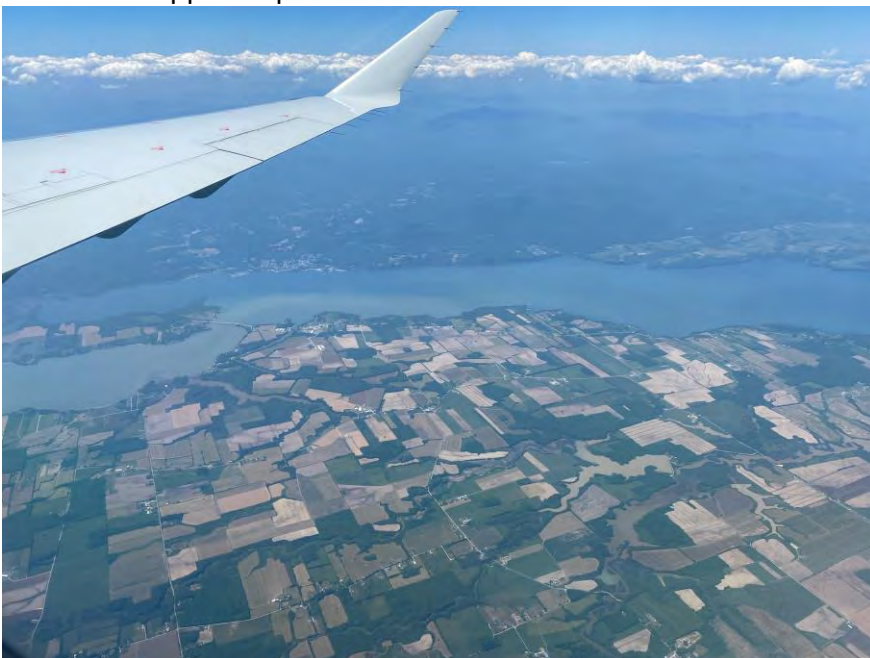


Barn in Monkton Village with newly installed solar panels and car charger

ENERGY PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION

A renewed focus on clean, renewable, sustainable and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunity and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation and natural resources efforts, and work with municipalities to assist with project implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process.

- ACRPC energy committee - hosted 8 energy committee meetings to provide updates on ongoing energy programs and opportunities. Included presentations on the Municipal Energy Resilience Program, Green Mountain Power sustainability, EV infrastructure planning
- Organized an energy outreach table at Addison County Field Days. Recruited volunteers and energy organization representatives to communicate energy efficiency opportunities and raise awareness of available resources including ACRPC.
- Supported the development of a multi town in-person button-up event to educate residents on weatherization DIY projects and Efficiency VT rebate opportunities.
- Provided technical assistance in understanding EV infrastructure requirements and available resources and programs to support community purchase of chargers.
- Collaborated with CVOEO's Green Saving Smart coach to communicate opportunities for low income individuals in relevant community spaces including the Addison County Hunger Council and member organizations, energy committees, church groups.
- Provided the Addison County Climate Action Economy Center technical assistance in identifying next steps following the production of the countywide Climate Action Plan.
- Provided staff support for the Walk Bike Council of Addison County. Organized the meetings, generated minutes, and contributed programmatic expertise on new and ongoing Bike/ped funding opportunities.
- Supported the development and kick-off of the Vergennes Energy Committee. Generated materials and a presentation to educate new members on key energy issues, programs, and action steps available to them.
- Provided technical assistance and guidance through the enhanced energy planning, adoption, and approval process.



CLEAN WATER

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to assist with completion of the required watershed basin plans. RPCs also work with municipalities to implement river corridor assessments in local planning efforts and regulations, which result in water quality improvements, riverine habitat and safer growth management decisions.

- Served as the Clean Water Service Provider for the Otter Creek Basin. Reviewed, commented on, and participated in development of Clean Water Service Provider guidance developed by the Department of Environmental Conservation Water Services Division. Created a website and spatial data hub for the Clean Water Service Provider.
- Empaneled and coordinated a Basin Water Quality Council to oversee the Clean Water Service Provider
- Provided funding through the Clean Water Service Provider to five entities undertaking eight projects to improve water quality.
- Oversaw Grants in Aid roadway improvement projects in 6 towns
- ACRPC continued its support of and participation as part of the Addison County River Watch Collaborative (ACRWC). ACRPC hosts the ACRWC meetings and sampling events, maintains the website with current sampling data for the public, and supports presentations to targeted community boards and “kitchen water chats.” ACRPC helped develop public outreach documents for the ACRWC including summary sheets of Middlebury River, New Haven River, and Lewis Creek, as well as information regarding recent contaminant levels at 8 observed recreational sites.
- ACRPC worked with ANR ’s Basin Planner to help add projects to the Otter Creek Tactical Basin Plan.
- ACRPC wrote and received a CWIP grant for all RPCs

Guide to Creating Accessory Dwelling Units

Addison County Regional
Planning Commission



SPECIAL PROJECTS

RPCs Work on a number of unique projects each year. Examples at ACRPC include:

- ACRPC continued to support the work of the Addison County Communications Union District, dba Maple Broadband, which it helped to create in 2020. Maple Broadband's goal is to bring broadband services to underserved populations throughout the county. ACRPC continued to help MapleBroadband in the current year. ACRPC also helped with GIS work to support systems development and marketing, kept Maple Broad's books and served as Clerk and advisor to Maple Broadband's Full Board and Executive Board.
- ACRPC continued its work with VTrans and the City of Vergennes to study and find solutions for the issues created by heavy truck traffic within the City Center. The Planning and Environmental Linkages Study ("PELS") now underway is taking a hard look at the land use planning impacts of any proposed solutions to ensure that the transportation design component of the project increases the overall economic vitality of all areas studied and to serve as a precursor to the federal NEPA process for any solutions chosen.
- In follow-up to its Housing Plan, this year ACRPC created a Guide to Creating Accessory Dwelling Units for the Region: [here](#). The guide provides a comprehensive guide for homeowners to use to create an accessory dwelling unit, including lots of practical connections to permitting authorities, forms and a financial calculator.
- ACRPC's Housing Committee developed a Regional **Housing Survey** with the goal of gaining a better understanding of the state of housing in our region, soliciting feedback about individuals' current housing status, their housing plans for the future as well as their perception of the

housing situation in their town. The survey was finalized in June 2023 and launched in July. As of September, we have received 600 responses. You can find the Survey at acrpc.org

ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING

ACRPC receives most of its funding through grants, and through a performance-based contract with the state. Town assessments constitute a small but very important percentage of our funding. For the 2023 fiscal year, ACRPC's total revenue of approximately \$800,000 dollars was derived from 95 percent state and federal grants supporting regional and local projects, and 5 percent from town assessments. While percentages may vary slightly from year to year, the year was typical of ACRPC revenue.

ACRPC used the last couple of years to completely revamp its technical capabilities and accounting systems.

- ACRPC converted its accounting system from fully paper accounting system to QuickBooks;
- ACRPC created and implemented a fully electronic document filing system so that all of its critical documents are now electronically stored and backed up on the cloud;
- ACRPC implemented QuickBooks online to create an electronic time tracking system to replace the paper based and/or excel based employee time tracking system;
- ACRPC updated our financial policies to reflect the new systems;
- ACRPC researched & brought in outside help to present new options to consider regarding how to structure ACRPC's retirement system
- ACRPC also upgraded its website and a significant number of its IT systems and software to help modernize its operations and improve its efficiency.
- ACRPC implemented using a bill payment system to allow for tighter controls of vendor payments including the ability to have invoices locked once entered, multiple reviewers, and an audit trail

ACRPC has an audit on an annual basis. For FY 2022, its most recent audit, there were no significant findings, which is the same result found in audits conducted in past years. ACRPC's audit for FY 2023 will be completed by December 2023.

'AT WORK' MAP

The map depicting the range of services provided by the ACRPC to member municipalities is included on the next page.

ACRPC At-Work FY23

July 2022 - June 2023

N



Legend

Designation

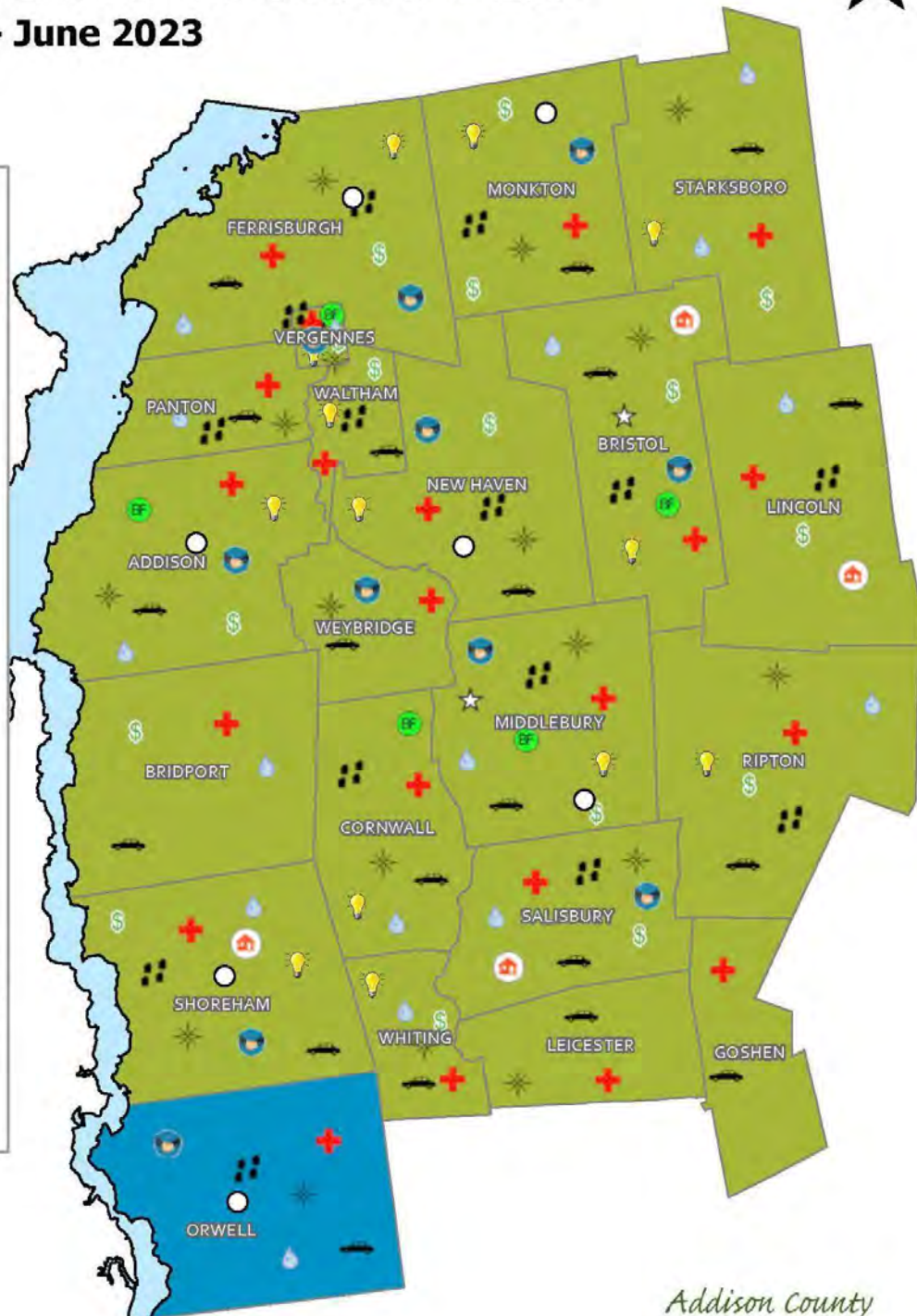
- ☆ Designated Downtown
- Designated Village
- Designated Growth Center
- △ Neighborhood Development Area
- ◇ New Town Center

Projects

- BF Brownfields
- 💧 Clean Water
- 🏠 Economic Development
- 💡 Energy Planning & Implementation
- ✚ Emergency Planning & Response
- 🌿 Equity & Environmental Justice and Healthy Communities
- 💵 Grant Writing
- 🏠 Housing
- ✳ Mapping
- 🏘 Planning and Zoning
- 🚧 Transportation Planning (including Bridge/Culvert Inventory, REI & Traffic Counts)

Town Plan Status

- 🟢 Current
- 🔵 Expired
- ⬜ No Town Plan



Addison County
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

08/2023

Bennington County Regional Commission

FY 2023 Annual Report

The Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) was created by the seventeen towns and villages it serves and works with and works on behalf of those municipalities to build strong, resilient, and sustainable communities, to foster economic prosperity, and to promote a high quality of life for residents of the region. This mission is accomplished through direct planning and community development assistance to town and village governments, through preparation and implementation of regional plans and studies, and through synergistic working relationships with local and regional organizations. The BCRC works cooperatively with local governments to establish and advance regional cohesiveness, actively advocates for adherence to adopted regional policies, and facilitates effective communication between local, state, and federal levels of government.

The BCRC maintains an office in an historic building in the center of Bennington's downtown. The commission is overseen by municipally appointed commissioners representing each of the member towns and villages as well as eight commissioners representing specific interests such as economic development, housing, transportation, and public health. An executive committee comprised of seven commissioners meets with the executive director on a regular basis to guide organizational policy and work program. The BCRC currently employs ten full-time staff. Principal program areas with assigned staff responsibilities include municipal and regional planning, transportation, environmental/water quality planning, community and economic development, emergency management planning, energy planning, public health planning, and solid waste planning and management.

Each program manager at the BCRC is responsible for work plan and budget development. The executive director, assistant director/planning programs manager, financial director, and community and economic development coordinator cooperate to ensure that all required tasks and reporting are completed and advance the Commission's mission. The BCRC reported total expenditures of approximately \$1.305 million in FY 2022. The majority of revenues are derived from grants that support specific work programs and special projects. Municipal appropriations and a portion of funds allocated to the BCRC from the municipal and regional planning fund provide critical support and matching funds to all of the diverse program areas operated through the Commission. The FY23 financial audit will be completed in September 2023 to confirm the accuracy of the BCRC's financial records.

Regular meetings of the BCRC are held every other month with special meetings held during intervening months. Most meetings include presentations and information on specific topics that support commissioners' understanding and involvement in regional and local planning policy and implementation, the Regional Initiatives/CEDS Committee, the Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance, the Bennington County Transportation Advisory Committee, the Southern Vermont Communications Union District, the Regional Emergency Management Committee, and a consortium of local energy committees. Commissioners serving on the executive committee may attend special trainings (e.g., financial management, regional economic development, housing, land use practices, energy planning, natural resource planning and environmental protection) to assist in the carrying

out of their responsibilities to the organization. BCRC staff regularly attend training courses and participate in online webinars on a variety of topics specific to their program areas.

PLANNING & ZONING

RPC's coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan and related studies. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors, and plan policies inform Act 250 and Section 248 review proceedings.

The Bennington County Regional Plan, most recently updated in 2017, is a resource document for local officials, organizations, and residents of the region. The plan includes implementation guidance supported by specific recommendations for projects and improvements that will benefit the region. Implementation tasks are identified in each of several key areas: comprehensive municipal planning, regulatory review, transportation, environmental planning, community and economic development, emergency management, energy planning, and solid waste management. BCRC staff have begun outlining strategy for a regional plan update that will include moving to a web-based format.

Meetings of the BCRC's Energy Committee and Development Review Committee are called as needed to inform reviews of Section 248 and Act 250 applications. The BCRC participated actively in 2 "major" Act 250 reviews in the 2023 fiscal year - The Green Mountain Reserve in Manchester and the Shires Housing Recovery Residence on Gage Street in Bennington. The BCRC found the location of the Green Mountain Reserve project to be inconsistent with regional plan policy as a hospitality development in a rural area. Although the Recovery Residence project did not meet the criteria for substantial regional impact, it was determined to constitute a "major" project due to neighbor concerns. The BCRC found the project to be consistent with regional plan policies.

An application was filed on June 7, 2023, by Orchid, LLC, for a 67-room hotel and spa on 46.1 acres located across Main Street from the Manchester Town Offices. This permit would replace the previous one for an 80-room hotel on the same site. BCRC will conduct a standard review of the revised project in the 2024 fiscal year but does not foresee conflicts with regional plan policy.

The BCRC participated in reviews for three Section 248 applications in the 2023 fiscal year – the proposed Waite solar array in Shaftsbury, a redesigned 2MW Chelsea Solar array in Bennington, and the 20MW "Shaftsbury Solar" proposal off of Holy Smoke Road in Shaftsbury.

The Waite array was found to be appropriately located based on regional energy plan siting analysis and land use considerations. Concerns over possible views from US 7 were addressed in a final submittal by moving part of the array.

Previously denied by PUC, the Chelsea Solar site plan was revised and resubmitted. The BCRC participated in the initial hearings in previous years, noting that the site is consistent with regional energy plan policy while outlining some concerns. The footprint of project has been reduced in attempt to address neighbors' concerns. Although the BCRC has noted that the project is now less

efficient, given prior participation and comments, the BCRC does not intend to participate in hearings for this iteration.

Previous to the formal filing, BCRC staff met with a “Shaftsbury Solar” engineering representative to identify potential concerns. After the 45-day pre-notice filing on December 22, 2022, the project garnered substantial attention and concern within the Shaftsbury community. BCRC staff participated in one public meeting and one open house conducted in Shaftsbury in advance of formal filing. The formal application for the 20MW “Shaftsbury Solar” project was filed on May 17, 2023. The BCRC Energy Committee reviewed the proposal on January 13, 2023, and will subsequently meet to devise findings on the formal application relative to regional energy plan policy in the coming months.

In addition to these formal Section 248 filings, the BCRC provided guidance to local village and town officials on the PUC review process for a proposed cell tower in downtown Manchester; however, a formal submittal to the Public Utility Commission has not yet been made. BCRC staff met with the developer of a proposed wind turbine in Stamford at the end of June, before the 45-day pre-notice was filed.

The BCRC’s work with member municipalities in recent years has emphasized improving municipal plans and local permitting through education and regular consultations (on-site training), bylaw modernization, support for policies that focus development in downtowns and village centers, including compliance with new requirements for economic development, housing development, forest fragmentation prevention, and flood resiliency policy. The BCRC’s work in municipal planning is supported through municipal and regional planning funds, payments from member towns and villages, and other grants. All technical assistance provided this year is shown on the At Work map (attached); highlights include:

- **MTAP:** The BCRC initiated work with the towns of Rupert, Sandgate, and Woodford under the Municipal Technical Assistance program. The program aims to provide expanded assistance to high needs municipalities to access state and federal funding for eligible projects including water and wastewater infrastructure, housing, community recovery, and other identified activities. Needs assessments for each town are being conducted by meeting with town officials, reviewing adopted town policy and planning documents, and otherwise assessing infrastructure, housing, economic development, environmental protection, and resilience needs.
- **Municipal Plan Updates:** The BCRC worked with Manchester Village, Peru, and Sandgate to develop updates to their municipal plans. The plans were amended to be consistent with “Act 174” energy planning standards and “Act 171” forest connectivity requirements. All plans are reviewed for conformance with statutory requirements, and implementation projects are clearly delineated. The BCRC received special funding to draft amendments to the Sandgate plan to comply with “Act 171” requirements for forest block connectivity. The BCRC began working with Woodford to update their municipal plan, including amendments to comply with Act 171 forest connectivity requirements.
- **Arlington Zoning Bylaw:** With Municipal Planning Grant funding, the BCRC finalized a rewrite of the Arlington zoning bylaw to improve overall organization and readability of the document

and to promote denser, mixed-use development in village centers where plans are underway to serve these areas with new or expanded public wastewater treatment in coming years.

- **Bylaw Modernization Grant Work:** In the spring of 2022, the BCRC began a work program with nine municipalities to implement bylaw improvements for housing that had been identified in the regional housing bylaw survey completed in 2021. This work is being conducted with funding from a Bylaw Modernization Grant (BMG) through the Department of Housing & Community Development. Municipalities included under the grant are Landgrove, Manchester Village, North Bennington, Old Bennington, Peru, Rupert, Sandgate, Shaftsbury, and Stamford. Of these, Shaftsbury enacted changes in line with the BMG program priorities in March 2023. Sandgate, Rupert, North Bennington, Old Bennington, Peru, Landgrove, and Manchester Village are on task to send revisions to public hearing soon. Manchester Village revisions are targeted and the village plans to continue taking a more comprehensive approach in the coming year. (The BCRC plans to assist the village to apply for a second BMG.) Stamford is not yet prepared to propose revisions. Municipalities that enact changes in line with the BMG priorities before the end of January 2024 are eligible for a waiver of match funds for the project.
- **Designation Program:** The BCRC continued to support downtown, village center, and neighborhood development area designations, including new village centers in Stamford and Sandgate and preparatory work for a new village center in Sunderland. These designations have been particularly helpful in supporting alignment of planning goals and local regulations and in securing critical historic preservation and downtown/village center tax credits and grants throughout the region.
- **Municipal Officials Training:** The BCRC updated its annual Land Use & Planning Essentials training for municipal officials and presented it in April to 15 participants representing 10 of our member municipalities. Eight participants provided evaluations of the training and rated it as effective, relevant, and useful to their municipal work. Participants generally felt that they gained knowledge of their roles and responsibilities as municipal officials, but that the one and a half hours allotted to the training did not leave enough time for questions and discussion. BCRC staff are considering a longer training course with a lunch break in future years. In addition, staff are planning to offer a roving brown bag series that will address land use and planning topics every 3 months to supplement the annual training. In addition to the annual training course BCRC staff responded to regular requests for assistance with various planning and zoning issues in all 17 of its member municipalities.
- **Manchester Zoning Revisions:** Under an hourly contractual basis the BCRC assisted Manchester in the preparation of zoning bylaw revisions. The planning commission held a public hearing on the draft revisions and a hearing before the Selectboard is upcoming.
- **Pownal Development Site Study:** With funding from a Municipal Planning Grant, the BCRC began work on a development site study with the Town of Pownal. This project will consider four economic development scenarios – mixed-use, residential, commercial, and industrial – and establish criteria consistent with local, regional, and state planning policies to identify 5 locations with the greatest development potential for each scenario. The study will also identify amendments to the town plan or zoning bylaws that would encourage development in the identified areas. The study is expected to be completed in September of 2023.

The BCRC has developed programs in solid waste management and planning and healthy community design that have led to numerous special projects and ongoing actions. The BCRC provides staffing for the Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance (BCSWA) and developed an updated Solid Waste Management Implementation Plan for that thirteen-town organization. BCRC staff manages the implementation of the plan and assures compliance with state rules related to solid waste. Some of the Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance's ongoing activities include:

- **Hazardous Waste:** Held two household hazardous waste collection events for residents and businesses of the 13 towns in the Alliance Service Area. Managed the development of a permanent household hazardous waste facility at the Bennington Transfer Station, funded by the member towns of the alliance and the VT Agency of Natural Resources. The facility became operational on July 31, 2023.
- **Battery Recycling:** Implementing a pilot program for ship from home collection boxes with the Call2Recycle program
- **Education:** Providing education and outreach to schools, municipalities, solid waste service providers, and the general public to increase recycling and organics management/composting and reduce levels of trash sent to landfills. The BCRC hosted an information booth at 4 public events.
- **Business Outreach:** Performing outreach to 80 businesses and technical assistance to 41 businesses, including housing management companies, restaurants, retail businesses and others.
- **School Outreach:** Performed outreach to 26 schools, performed assessments of current solid waste management for all schools within the SVSU school district, and provided recommendations for improving recycling and food waste management. Led 3 educational programs for students related to solid waste.
- **Residential Composting:** Organizing residential composting workshops and providing composting related items at wholesale prices to help residents comply with state food scrap diversion legislation.
- **Newsletter:** Producing and distributing a regular newsletter on solid waste issues and maintaining a social media presence to educate the public on waste reduction, food scrap diversion, and household hazardous waste events.
- **Legislative Input:** Supporting legislation to create extended producer responsibility programs to require manufacturers to pay for the costs of recycling packaging and for the collection and disposal of household hazardous waste.
- **Financial Management Support:** Overseeing a cost sharing program for 5 towns who collectively share 2 waste transfer stations.

BROWNFIELDS

Vermont RPCs have been awarded over 10 million dollars for this economic development initiative. Environmental site assessments and Corrective Action Plans allow properties to be remediated, sold,

developed, or re-developed in ways that benefit the local and state economy, create or protect jobs, and increase housing opportunities.

The BCRC was awarded a US EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant that was extended through September 2022. Through direct contact with municipalities and individual property owners, the BCRC has identified sites that would benefit from assessments, provided information on brownfield redevelopment, and monitored redevelopment of sites that were assessed in the past. BCRC staff advises owners of several potential brownfield sites in anticipation of future Phase I and Phase II environmental site assessments (ESAs). The BCRC maintains a Brownfields committee that prioritizes sites for assessment and clean-up planning.

Brownfield sites participating in Phase I or II assessments, corrective action plans, or other follow-up work during the past year include:

- Putnam Block Redevelopment – Phase II: Corrective Action Plan being implemented to pursue mixed use redevelopment of historic downtown block. A project-specific \$500,000 Brownfield redevelopment grant was awarded for Phase II of this project. The CAPA/CAFI and is complete and two public hearings have been held. An RFP for the remediation work was produced and a contractor selected for clean-up work in Spring 2023 (remediation completed in August).
- Lauzon Machine and Engineering in Bennington: Completed Phase I ESA and Phase 2 ESA. A supplemental Phase 2 ESA scope of work and cost proposal is currently being developed. Redevelopment plan includes housing and potential commercial and retail services.
- Bradford Commons in Downtown Bennington: completed Phase I ESA. The redevelopment plan includes mixed use commercial and retail services.
- 301 Depot Street in Downtown Manchester: completed Phase I and II ESA.; a supplemental Phase 2 scope of work is currently being developed. The redevelopment plan includes mixed use commercial and retail services as well as workforce housing.
- Manchester Power House located in the Taconic Business Park in Manchester: completed Phase I and Phase 2 ESAs. The redevelopment plan includes mixed use commercial and retail services as well as several workforce housing units.
- Sweeney Sawmill located on Town Shed Road in Manchester: completed Phase I ESA.; A Phase 2 ESA scope of work and cost proposal have been developed but have been postponed while the property goes through probate court. The redevelopment plan includes an expansion of the adjacent Manchester Highway Facility.
- The former Bennington High School in Downtown Bennington: A Phase 2 ESA scope of work has been developed and approved by the Vermont DEC. The Phase 2 ESA fieldwork is currently underway.
- Energizer Factory Complex – This recently closed manufacturing facility has become available for redevelopment. The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation secured a Brownfields area-wide planning grant that the Town and the BCRC combined with other grant funds for a study and assessment of reuse potential (completed in September 2021).
- Ideal Fuels property, the Benmont Mill lot, a service station at Dewey and Main St, the former Bennington High School, the Titan Propane Company, and the Johnson Controls lot - all in Bennington's Growth Center were identified as potential future assessment sites.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Cooperative and creative engagement with the region's municipalities, community organizations, and business sectors, as well as close working relationships with relevant state and federal agencies, is at the heart of BCRC's activities and professional expertise in community and economic development. BCRC has maintained a community development program since 2012 and expanded it to include economic development in 2016. Since then, BCRC has served as both the RPC and RDC for southwestern Vermont, and approximately three staff members work in this program full or part-time.

Strong relationships within Bennington County and across Southern Vermont, as well as an intentional pivot to project-based work to complement traditional grant-funded opportunities, has helped BCRC to expand its engagements. The following are highlights for FY23 work, which reflect the variety of services provided:

- **Bennington Armory Reuse Study:** In January of 2023 BCRC completed a report for the Town of Bennington that outlined opportunities for reuse of the Bennington Armory, an 8,220 sq. ft building on a 0.5-acre downtown parcel slated for transfer from the Army National Guard to the Town of Bennington. This Municipal Planning Grant-funded work included convening a steering committee, creating a site inventory, organizing tours, compiling a history of the facility, performing an energy audit, exploring other Armory redevelopment projects in comparable communities, and engaging with local press regarding public interest in the proposed land swap between the Town and the National Guard.
- **Walloomsac Inn Redevelopment Notice:** In the Spring of 2023 BCRC staff received an inquiry from the Preservation Trust of Vermont about the potential for creating a document that could generate interest in the former Walloomsac Inn, now an unused residence in a prominent location of Old Bennington. BCRC staff worked with several stakeholders, including the site's owners, to create and selectively distribute an engaging and descriptive document that features the Inn, its surroundings, and its economic context.
- **Dorset Housing Study:** Described more fully in the Housing section of the document, the Town of Dorset procured BCRC's services to assess the town's housing dynamics and its impacts on local employers, and to provide a review of municipal options regarding such matters.
- **Southern Vermont Communications Union District:** The BCRC has supported the formation and work of the Southern Vermont Communication Union District, providing fiscal management and staff support for efforts to expand access to broadband in rural areas throughout the region. In September 2022 the Vermont Community Broadband Board approved the CUD's \$9.01 million application under Act 71 to fund a two-year buildout of a fiber optic network to unserved and underserved premises throughout Bennington County. This funding will support a public-private partnership between the SoVT CUD and Consolidated Communications that will leverage another \$14.1 million in fiber optic network construction guaranteed by Consolidated to occur in FY23 and FY24. By the end of 2023, 99.3 percent of currently unserved passings within the district will be connected to fiber optic broadband through this partnership.

- **Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone:** The legal work to provide for the creation of an entity to serve as the designee for a formal Southern Vermont Economic Development District has been completed with support from the Bennington County Regional Commission, Brattleboro Development Corporation and Windham Regional Commission. Development of the legal entity is the first step in the effort to create an EDD serving the two southernmost counties in Vermont. In Q1, staff from BCRC and BDCC began reaching out to municipalities to secure letters of support for the proposed EDD, a process that was successfully concluded in Q3. The formal application to become an EDD has now been submitted to the United States Economic Development Administration.

BCRC coordinated with colleagues at BDCC to tailor the CEDS project submission timeline from an early spring submission period to a September submission period, with the goal of identifying vital projects in plenty of time to inform the year-end deadline for developing the NBRC regional top ten lists. by the end of the calendar year or early 2022. Approximately eighty projects were submitted for consideration by the deadline. The project review committee, with representatives from both counties, met on November 9th in Dover to review the submissions and identify the priority projects.

Projects were selected by a CEDS Project Review Committee composed of members of the public and business community. The committee reviewed 78 projects from municipalities, businesses, and non-profit organizations across the two-county region. They met in Dover in early November to complete a final project review and select 10 vital projects. Four of the ten projects are in Bennington County: the Bennington Community Market; Putnam Community Health (Putnam Block Phase 2); Southshire Regenerative Food Center; and the Southwestern Vermont Health Care/Castleton University Nursing Partnership.

Staff continue to engage fully with the Southern Vermont team renewed presence in the Working Communities Challenge program. As a core team member, BCRC commits staff time to the initiative as it unfolds and is working with BDCC staff to facilitate outreach and engagement. In FY23 this work has included the establishment of an oral history program in conjunction with the Vermont Folklife Center; a Nawruz celebration; a recent potluck evening; and discussion with the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston to provide input on a forthcoming model for inclusive economies.

BCRC remain closely connected with the several agencies and volunteers providing support to Afghan refugees in Southern Vermont: SIT, BDCC, The Tutorial Center, BCOA, ECDC, VDOL, and the Refugee Resettlement Office, among others. Through its operating agreement with BDCC, BCRC is driving regional uptake of resources that detail best practices for employers onboarding refugees and reducing the communications workload placed on local volunteers. In recent months, ECDC has established a staffed field office in Bennington, providing BCRC staff with a single point of contact for refugee case management contacts.

The 6th annual Southern Vermont Economy Summit took place in Wilmington on May 23, 2023. The theme of the 2023 Southern Vermont Economy Summit was “Forging our Future” and it was a major success bringing together just under 300 people dedicated to improving the economic conditions and lives of those living in Southern Vermont. At the Summit, BCRC’s Callie Fishburn was named one of eighteen Southern Vermont Emerging Leaders. The Southern Vermont Economy Summit is co-produced by BCRC and the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation.

BCRC remains an active member of the Vermont Creative Network’s Southern Vermont Zone. The Zone, one of five in the network, covers Bennington and Windham counties. Staff are focused on bringing economic development perspectives to the team’s activities, and facilitating data-informed conversations within the creative community and the broader business community it operates in. VCN staff will join BCRC at its next commissioners meeting in November to discuss VCN, its action plan for the state’s creative economy, and how its work advances regional goals in Southwestern Vermont. The November BCRC Commission Meeting featured presentations by Vermont Creative Network’s Johanna de Graffenreid and representatives of the Southern Vermont Creative Network.

- **Business Visitations and Support:** BCRC staff conducted 82 business visits in FY23. Businesses included large manufacturers and healthcare providers, nonprofit museums and land trusts, art galleries, value-added agricultural producers, downtown retail, food service, real estate offices, and new business startups. Topics included workforce challenges, Vermont Capital Investment Grants, Building Communities Grants, Community Recovery & Revitalization Program (CRRP), real estate development and rehabilitation, community support, housing challenges, land management network building, business acquisitions, and business relocation incentives.
- **Community Recovery & Revitalization Program:** CRRP grants are available to for-profit, nonprofit, and municipal applicants. The funding is intended for projects making capital improvements or capital expansions that spur economic recovery and revitalization in communities across the state. Eligible projects may include those that assist industries most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic such as arts and entertainment, hospitality, agriculture, and educational services. The funding is also available for capital expenditures that support childcare and affordable housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income households, and to establish or improve municipal water and wastewater systems to build housing or create jobs through business creation and expansion. Projects must show a COVID impact. BCRC worked with sixteen (16) applicants to provide guidance on the applications, information on prevailing wages in the region and writing letters of support prior to the December 29th timeline during which the program provided preference to rural applicants. During the first announced round of awards the Town of Manchester received \$603,776 for a sewer line extension, Hale Resources received \$500,000 to support the development of housing at the former Bennington High School building on Main Street and Bennington Museum received \$36,944 for facilities upgrades. In the second round of awards, the Dorset Water District was awarded \$1,000,000 for upgrades to the town’s water system.

- **Capital for a Day/ARPA Funding Session:** BCRC assisted the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development and the Governor's office in arranging a meeting of all State agencies with ARPA and other sources of funding for municipal, organizational, and business leaders in the region. The event, held at the Manchester Community Library on December 5th, drew about sixty community members who had the chance to hear about funding resources and ask questions about their existing or potential projects.
- **Putnam Block Redevelopment:** The completed Phase 1 of the Putnam Block Redevelopment continues to fill with tenants. All thirty-one residential units were committed as of the day the project construction was completed. Commercial tenants including the Bennington College Development Office, VNA-Hospice of the Southwest Region, Southwestern Vermont Health Care, Great Fields Pet Supply and Grooming, Bespoke Salon, Bennington Bookshop, The Coffee Bar and Global Z International are now occupying the buildings. Interior fit-up work is underway for Union South; a 120-seat restaurant that hopes to open in September 2023. Discussions with additional retail, food and office tenants is ongoing. Planning for Phase 2 of the redevelopment is well underway. A preliminary letter of intent from Southwestern Vermont Health Care has been secured totaling approximately 12,000 SF of clinical use. The remainder of Phase 2 is likely to be some small retail spaces on the first floor and three or four floors of housing for up to sixty units. A public meeting to receive input on the proposed project took place earlier in 2022 and the development of a pitch deck for investors is being created. A feasibility study showing a project that pencils out was completed and solicitation of prospective investors is underway.
- **Bennington High School (Benn Hi) Redevelopment Project:** BCRC staff met with representatives of the Town of Bennington and Hale Resources to provide support and guidance for a potential redevelopment project at the former Bennington High School (Benn Hi) building on Main Street in Bennington. It is a complex project that, if successful, would lead to the relocation and expansion of the Bennington Senior Center and Meals on Wheels program, new and improved gymnasium, and other recreational space for the Bennington Branch of the Northern Berkshire YMCA and thirty-seven (37) new affordable and market rate housing units in the historic structure. The BCRC Executive Director has been meeting regularly with Hale Resources to discuss funding opportunities and structure calling upon the success of the Putnam Block Redevelopment project as a model and spoke at a March Bennington Select Board meeting in support of a VCDP grant application to further the project which was ultimately awarded.
- **Workforce Development:** The BCRC Workforce and Education Committee continued its monthly meetings in a virtual format to begin the fiscal year. Areas of discussion included shoring up childcare in the region, planning and support in conjunction with regional partners for a September career fairs in Bennington and initial planning to relaunch in person April Career month activities in 2023. BCRC worked on planning for a Bennington Career Expo in conjunction with the Vermont Department of Labor, Creative Workforce Solutions and the Southwestern Vermont Chamber of Commerce and the event was a big success in September with over 100 job seekers and 44 employers. Much planning went into the return of in person

events for Bennington County Career Month in April following a pause and move to virtual events during the pandemic. Over twenty events took place throughout the county in April and into early May. The Town of Bennington Select Board officially recognized Career Month with an official proclamation at its March 27th meeting.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Through a contract with VTrans, RPCs coordinate the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort has provided a statewide framework for public involvement in planning improvements to Vermont's transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the state's transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state, and federal transportation network advancement. The past year's accomplishments as they relate to the BCRC's TPI work program include:

Objective #1: Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions and Municipalities

- The BCRC's Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) met regularly during the past year. The TAC consists of 17 members. Principal functions of the TAC are to provide input on specific projects and to prioritize projects in several program areas. BCRC staff and the TAC participated in and provided critical input on the cancelation of the Bennington Bypass South Project.
- Provided direct outreach to each member town and village regarding codes and standards, hazard mitigation planning, erosion control and stormwater management, and related funding and financial considerations.
- Participated in development of projects involving bicycle and pedestrian system connectivity and streetscape improvements in Bennington, Arlington, Manchester, Pownal, Manchester Village, Rupert, and Dorset. Led an effort to identify impediments to timely development of bike-ped projects and to identify solutions.
- The BCRC continues to chair the Regional Mobility Committee, in partnership with the local transit provider, the Green Mountain Community Network, and VTrans.
- BCRC staff has participated in planning for intersection safety improvements, with a special focus on the VT 67A corridor near Bennington College and the Kocher Drive/Route 7 intersection in Bennington, the Route 313 and Warm Brook Road intersection in Arlington, the Route 30 and East Manchester Road intersection in Manchester, and VT 7A in Manchester Village.
- The BCRC is participating in implementation of the Transportation Resilience Planning Tool by applying those techniques to the Batten Kill watershed.

Objective #2: Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning

- The BCRC continued to work with Green Mountain Community Network and several Northshire towns regarding service needs and opportunities in rural communities.
- The BCRC has worked to integrate energy plans with TPI program objectives and is coordinating a statewide effort to support implementation of local and regional energy plans. In addition, the BCRC has organized events focusing on electric vehicles (cars and bikes).
- The BCRC is a founding member of the Bennington Bike Hub, a non-profit dedicated to promoting cycling for transportation. In the first year of operation, the Bike Hub has given away nearly 100 bicycles to people in need of basic transportation. In addition, the Bike Hub runs education and outreach programs to promote cycling for transportation.

Objective #3: Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities

- Arlington: Managing the design/construction phase of a safe walking route to link the Arlington Recreation Park to the Village Center and the Arlington Public Schools.
- Bennington: Ongoing planning and project management for the “Ninja Trail” design-build project, and the Benmont Streetscape improvements project in Bennington.
- Dorset: BCRC staff is managing a scoping study to evaluate alternatives for a new shared-use path to connect Dorset’s village center to the recently completed Manchester Rail Trail. Combined, the two paths would create a continuous 6.5 mile shared-use path linking Dorset’s village center to downtown Manchester along the VT30 Corridor.
- Manchester: The BCRC is working with the Green Mountain Community Network on a micro-transit pilot program serving Manchester.
- Shaftsbury: The BCRC is managing a scoping study to add sidewalks and traffic calming measures in a village area.
- BCRC staff completed a scoping report on a potential a multi-use path along a historic trolley line from Bennington to Williamstown, MA. BCRC staff worked cooperatively with the towns and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. Historic alignments, ownership, and environmental issues were documented. The BCRC is organizing a steering committee to bring the project to fruition.
- The BCRC completed a number of traffic studies to aid local planning in Arlington, Sandgate, North Bennington, Bennington, Dorset, Rupert, Shaftsbury, and Stamford.
- The BCRC provided support for municipal road stormwater management and flood resilience planning and implementation in most municipalities.

Objective 1 - Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions and Municipalities

Performance Indicator	Value	Notes & Explanation
A # of TAC meetings held	3	
B # of non-municipal TAC members actively engaged in transportation planning	3	TAC members who are not municipal employees or not commissioners appointed by Towns.
C # of municipalities actively engaged in transportation planning	17	
D # of RPC coordination activities with municipalities and VTrans	9	

Objective 2 - Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning

Performance Indicator	Value	Notes & Explanation
E # of regional transportation plans that are current (within 8 years)	1	
F # of Act 250 applications with RPC comments relating to transportation	0	
G # of Section 248 applications with RPC comments relating to transportation	1	Sec 248 application for VT7 access for Shaftsbury solar project
H # of coordination activities in support of regional public transit providers	2	E&D Committee and bus stop inventory
I # of VTrans committees that involves RPC staff participation	0	
J # of regions participating in Project Prioritization	1	

Objective 3 - Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities

Performance Indicator	Value	Notes & Explanation
K # of municipalities participating in road foreman meetings annually	10	
L-1 # of municipalities assisted with transportation related grants	16	13 Grant in Aid, 3 Bike/Ped/TA
L-2 # of grant programs assisted municipalities with for transportation related grants	4	Bike/Ped Grants, TA Grants, Grant in Aid, Better Roads
M % of budget spent on municipal technical assistance	52%	0% of Task 1, 60% of Tasks 2-4, 75% of Tasks 5&6, 0% of Task 7
N # of municipal transportation inventories conducted	3	Bennington sidewalk condition inventory, 2 culvert inventories.
O # of municipal transportation related feasibility/project definition studies completed/undertaken	6	Shaftsbury Grandview/Hawks Sidewalk Scoping Study, Dorset - Manchester Shared-Use Path Scoping Study, BCRC Transportation Project Guide (each entry is a mini feasibility/project definition study. 3 project guide projects done last year.
P # of municipalities assisted with transportation element of municipal/town plan	2	Stamford, Manchester Village
Q # of road erosion inventories in support of the MRGP completed using TPI dollars and using other funding sources	1	

Objective 4 - Deliver Results that Advance VTrans Strategic and Long Range Transportation Plans

Performance Indicator	Value	Notes & Explanation
R # of data collection activities conducted specifically for VTrans	4	4 bike/ped counts, 1 query to road foremen about projects that would change road surface for HPMS task.

Objective 5 - Provide a Mechanism for Improved Public Outreach and Education

Highlight of innovative, resourceful, and/or collaborative efforts from Region		
Report on unique examples of situations (unplanned events, addressing needs that arise, etc.) that occurred during the prior year in which the RPC conducted outreach or education beyond that of routine task efforts.		
List examples of innovative transportation planning efforts the RPC engaged in: See Guidance for examples from prior reporting.		
1 Assisted the founding of the Bennington Bike Hub, a non-profit dedicated to promoting cycling for transportation. In the first year of operation, the Bike Hub has given away nearly 100 bikes to people in need of basic transportation.		

EMERGENCY PLANNING & RESPONSE

RPCs play key roles in the mitigation and preparedness phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont Emergency Management, the Vermont Homeland Security Unit, VTrans and the Agency of Natural Resources. RPCs provide direct staff support to the State Emergency Operations Center, administrative support to Regional Emergency Management Committees (REMC), and coordination among responders and planners throughout the State's four Public Safety Districts. RPCs also help update floodplain bylaws and FEMA-required hazard mitigation plans, coordinate updates to municipal emergency plans, and assist as needed in special circumstances like Tropical Storm Irene and other declared disasters.

- The BCRC continued to support municipalities in developing and updating Local Emergency Management Plans (LEMPs). BCRC staff worked one-on-one with municipalities that requested extra assistance and sent out individual ERAF reports to each municipality. The ERAF Reports highlighted the need for LEMP updates, as well as other ERAF requirements

needed to receive more state funding for public infrastructure damage after a declared disaster.

- The BCRC provides support for development and updates to local hazard mitigation plans. The BCRC completed one local hazard mitigation plan and began work on a second plan to be completed in December 2023. Flood resiliency and stormwater actions, assessments of threats from forest insect pests, and economic development planning relevant to hazard mitigation are considered as part of the planning process.
- The BCRC staff provided ongoing administrative support for the REMC including meeting scheduling, minute taking, and following Vermont's Open Meeting Law.
- BCRC staff is on the local MRC Committee and attends meetings regularly.
- The BCRC was activated as local liaison several times during the year and has assisted Vermont emergency Management with information regarding impacts from hazardous weather.
- Other focus areas during the past year included: distributing emergency management training information, scheduling emergency management related trainings, coordinating and supporting Emergency Management Directors and municipal officials with assistance and guidance, and ongoing COVID-19 support and information sharing.

CLEAN WATER

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to assist with completion of the EPA required Tactical Basin Plans. RPCs also work with municipalities to implement river corridor assessments in local planning and regulations which result in better and safer growth management decisions.

- Assisted VT ANR by integrating recommendations from the Basin 1 Tactical Plan into local hazard mitigation plans, projects, and land use plans and regulations.
- Identified actions related to river protection outlined in adopted Hazard Mitigation Plans and integrated that information into ANR's Clean Water Projects database for future funding allocation.
- Prepared tables characterizing flood and fluvial erosion hazard mitigation projects and drafted language for use of the tables in resiliency elements of municipal plans.
- Created and updated town river corridor maps for the Batten Kill, Walloomsac, Hoosic, and Mettawee watersheds; assisted with the development and adoption of municipal river corridor regulations.
- BCRC staff attended monthly meetings of the Batten Kill Watershed Alliance and the Bennington County Conservation District and assisted with their municipal education, public outreach, and water quality improvement projects. Supported work on a project to assess and remediate obstacles to passages for aquatic organisms in North Bennington, and Sandgate.
- The BCRC worked with the Batten Kill Watershed Alliance, Bennington County Conservation District, and Trout Unlimited to identify and treat invasive species in selected areas of the Batten Kill watershed and to identify areas in need of revegetation. Plantings of native trees and shrubs were completed along the Batten Kill, Green River, White Creek and the Walloomsac River, with additional sites identified and approved for future plantings.

- The BCRC worked directly with most towns and villages in the region to identify, implement, and verify completion of “Grants-in-Aid” water quality improvements to hydrologically connected segments of municipal highways.
- The BCRC coordinated the development of stormwater master plans in Manchester, Manchester Village, Bennington, North Bennington and Pownal.
- Coordinated the removal of several downed trees in the Batten Kill which posed a serious threat to public safety. Coordinated meetings of watershed partners, state agencies, municipalities and private property owners to establish a protocol for future woody debris issues, addressing public safety while preserving and enhancing wildlife habitat and bank stabilization.

EMERGENCY PLANNING & RESPONSE

RPCs play key roles in the mitigation and preparedness phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont Emergency Management, the Vermont Homeland Security Unit, VTrans and the Agency of Natural Resources. RPCs provide direct staff support to the State Emergency Operations Center, administrative support to Regional Emergency Management Committees (REMC), and coordination among responders and planners throughout the State’s four Public Safety Districts. RPCs also help update floodplain bylaws and FEMA-required hazard mitigation plans, coordinate updates to municipal emergency plans, and assist as needed in special circumstances like Tropical Storm Irene and other declared disasters.

- The BCRC continued to support municipalities in developing and updating Local Emergency Management Plans (LEMPs). BCRC staff worked one-on-one with municipalities that requested extra assistance and sent out individual ERAF reports to each municipality. The ERAF Reports highlighted the need for LEMP updates, as well as other ERAF requirements needed to receive more state funding for public infrastructure damage after a declared disaster.
- The BCRC provides support for development and updates to local hazard mitigation plans. The BCRC completed one local hazard mitigation plan and began work on a second plan to be completed in December 2023. Flood resiliency and stormwater actions, assessments of threats from forest insect pests, and economic development planning relevant to hazard mitigation are considered as part of the planning process.
- The BCRC staff provided ongoing administrative support for the REMC including meeting scheduling, minute taking, and following Vermont’s Open Meeting Law.
- BCRC staff is on the local MRC Committee and attends meetings regularly.
- The BCRC was activated as local liaison several times during the year and has assisted Vermont emergency Management with information regarding impacts from hazardous weather.
- Other focus areas during the past year included: distributing emergency management training information, scheduling emergency management related trainings, coordinating and supporting Emergency Management Directors and municipal officials with assistance and guidance, and ongoing COVID-19 support and information sharing.

SUMMER 2023 FLOOD RESPONSE

During the multiple storm events that occurred during July 2023, the BCRC was activated as a local liaison between the state and the municipalities in the region. BCRC staff kept in contact with the local emergency management directors throughout the region immediately after the initial flooding and then throughout the subsequent storm events that hit the state. In order to provide the state with on-the-ground situational awareness, the local liaisons gathered information regarding damages within the towns and then relayed the information to the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) via the WebEOC system. BCRC staff also participated in the regular statewide situational briefings and acted as a Documentation Unit Leader for the SEOC on multiple occasions.

The Bennington region was largely spared, however the towns in the southwest and northern sections of Bennington County did sustain substantial damages, leading the county to become eligible for Public Assistance (PA) funding. The BCRC helped host the public assistance briefing for southwestern Vermont and continuously worked with local towns to ensure that they were able to apply for PA funding. The BCRC also joined forces with local state representatives for two in-person meetings with residents whose homes were damaged to share information regarding the next steps for their recovery processes. The BCRC continues to monitor the situation and provide towns and residents with pertinent recovery information.

ENERGY PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION

A renewed focus on clean, renewable, sustainable, and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunities and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation, and natural resources efforts, and we work with municipalities to assist with project implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process.

- The BCRC has continued efforts to support local energy committees, assisting with weatherization events, including “Button-Up” and “Window Dressers” programs, and coordination with Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network (VECAN), Efficiency VT, and other partners. The BCRC engages in ongoing coordination with the Department of Buildings and General Services on the implementation of the new Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP). BCRC has helped six municipalities apply for energy resilience “mini-grants” and five municipalities apply for free building energy assessments. BCRC’s energy planner is one of the three senior energy planners coordinating directly with BGS on MERP implementation. The BCRC has helped a majority of the municipalities in the region develop enhanced energy plans, including Shaftsbury, which is currently in progress. These plans are used to guide local energy efficiency efforts and to represent municipalities’ positions on applications for new generation projects before the Public Utility Commission. The BCRC issued affirmative Determinations of Energy Compliance to Glastenbury, Sandgate, Peru, and Manchester Village when the plans were found to be consistent with Act 174 planning standards. The BCRC also continues to provide new energy-related information to towns and villages as it is developed. For example,

data on local energy usage and efficiency activities were provided to each community as annual updates were received from Efficiency Vermont and other organizations.

- The BCRC attends regular meetings of RPC energy/climate planners. Beginning in the summer of 2022, BCRC and the other RPCs have coordinated with DPS on an update of the Act 174 energy planning standards and statewide data, providing regional data for the LEAP model, and reviewing draft model outputs. The BCRC reviewed and commented on proposals for new renewable energy development in the region and participated in Section 248 proceedings. The regional energy committee reviewed a proposed solar projects with a capacity of 20 MW. The BCRC's energy and development review committees met with developers and invited local officials to participate in discussions of possible new projects.
- Support was provided to towns and villages seeking to establish and maintain designated village centers, downtowns, and neighborhood development areas, to develop or expand needed infrastructure to enable energy-efficient walkable communities, and to revise land use regulations in keeping with new statewide initiatives for regulatory reform that encourages more diverse and higher density housing.

EQUITY & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE & HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

- Participation in the Launch Team of the Bennington County Regional Prevention Partnerships For Success (PFS) to reduce substance misuse in youth and young adults. Contributions of BCRC staff have focused on interpretation of emergent commercial cannabis policies and implications for municipalities, production of a municipal health equity guide, and regular updates to the regional Health Planning Primer.
- The BCRC participated in a statewide health equity learning collaborative and acted as a backbone organization for health equity initiatives in Bennington County. As part of this initiative, the BCRC acted as the pass-through entity for \$150,000 that was awarded to five local organizations to advance health equity in the community.
- The BCRC managed two studies related to the local unhoused population for the Bennington Continuum of Care (COC), a group of not-for-profit service providers. The first study looked at the prevalence of Unaccompanied Youth in the southern part of Bennington County, and collected data from surveys and interviews with officials, service agencies, and unhoused youth related to the needs of the population and their ability to access care. BCRC managed an RFP and hired Proscenium Data Solutions to assist with data collection and analysis. BCRC gathered key stakeholders and provided local support towards the effort. BCRC continues to serve on a committee working to implement solutions related to the outcomes of the Unaccompanied Youth report. The COC also engaged BCRC to develop a plan for a Public Sanitation Facility in Downtown Bennington that would act as both a public restroom and a place where the local unhoused population could access services including laundry, showers, phone services, warming/cooling services and information about how to access care. BCRC managed an RFP and hired Placework Studio to assist with developing an architectural vision for the facility and to help estimate the potential costs of site development. BCRC again gathered key stakeholders and has provided local support towards the effort. BCRC is developing a final project report with expected completion in September of 2023.

- BCRC staff completed work on the VAPDA Public Health Equity Toolkit, collaborating with the other ten RPCs to develop a toolkit to help municipal leaders increase their awareness, understanding, and capacity for including health equity language in their municipal plans and to help them develop partnerships and resources to advance health equity locally. This project complements the statewide health equity learning collaborative discussed above, that is funded by the Vermont Public Health Institute and their Community Health Equity Partnership “Backbone” program.
- Worked to improve regional food systems. Specific activities have included work with Bennington College’s food security initiative, support for establishing a regional regenerative food network, and participation in an effort to create a regional food hub and distribution center supported by renewable energy.
- The BCRC collaborated with the Bennington Office of Local Health, the Town of Bennington, and other partners on a health impact assessment (HIA) of the “BennHi” Redevelopment project in downtown Bennington. The HIA involved an analysis of demographic and public health data, as well as a survey and public engagement sessions with populations affected by the project.

HOUSING

- BCRC staff were engaged in legislative discussions that led to the passage of Act 47 (HOME Act).
- BCRC staff prepared and provided a user-friendly summary of the broad-reaching HOME Act (Act 47) and distributed it to municipal officials throughout the region. The BCRC has otherwise served as a resource to planning commissioners, development review boards, and zoning administrators as they work to understand the implications for local regulatory requirements and development review and permitting for housing development in their jurisdictions.
- The BCRC performed a study of housing trends and affordability for the Town of Dorset. The study included identifying trends in Dorset’s housing stock, development patterns, affordability and how the current housing paradigm has impacted the Town economy. Interviews with local employers – including manufacturing, education, and retail – provided a series of qualitative assessments highlighting the impacts of the housing stock on the local economy. It also included a summary of municipal tools and best practices related to the development of affordable housing and made recommendations for how housing should be considered as part of the redevelopment plan of a 307-acre parcel recently acquired by the Town. Results were presented to the Dorset Selectboard.
- The BCRC administered a Bylaw Modernization Grant (BMG) to secure updates to the land use regulations for 9 municipalities aimed at removing barriers to housing development. In addition, with Municipal Planning Grant funding, the BCRC assisted the Town of Arlington with a comprehensive revision to its land use ordinance that included removal of barriers to housing development. This work is further described in the planning and zoning section of this report.

- The BCRC has provided critical technical support for several housing projects in predevelopment throughout the region including the aforementioned Putnam Block projects in Bennington, a 108,000 sq. ft. mixed-use project including thirty-nine mixed-income apartments at the former Benn High property in Bennington and a mixed-use project on Depot Street in Manchester.

GRANT WRITING

- **Manchester Town Plan:** The BCRC prepared and submitted a municipal planning grant proposal on behalf of the Town of Manchester to fund a broad public engagement effort to develop an action-oriented town plan. The \$23,220 grant was awarded, but due to staffing changes, the town asked the Department of Housing & Community Development for a year's postponement of the award.
- **Pownal Village Center:** The BCRC assisted the Town of Pownal in drafting a municipal planning grant proposal for improvements to Center Street Park and the Village Center. The \$18,450 grant was awarded, but the project has yet to begin. The BCRC assisted the Town of Bennington to submit a municipal planning grant proposal to fund a public engagement effort for the development of a new town plan with a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion. This project is phase one of the new town plan effort involving designing and implementing a program of public engagement, and then synthesizing public input into a thematic outline for a new town plan. The \$23,560 grant was awarded and the town subsequently engaged the BCRC to lead the public engagement and DEI effort. Phase two of the effort is envisioned to be separately funded and will involve writing the new town plan and garnering public response and input before adoption.
- **Manchester Bike/Ped:** The BCRC prepared a successful application to the 2023 VTrans Bicycle & Pedestrian Grant application on behalf of the Town of Manchester for \$48,000 for a scoping study to assess potential measures to enhance bicycling safety and comfort along Main Street/Route VT7A from Barnumville Road in the Town of Manchester to Prospect Street in Manchester Village. Despite the short distance (1.3 miles) separating the Town of Manchester's village center and Manchester Village, narrow road shoulders, substantial traffic volumes (AADT 8,600 - 11,500), and sharp granite curbs deter many individuals from cycling.
- **Ninja Path Construction:** The BCRC prepared a successful application to the 2023 VTrans Bicycle & Pedestrian Grant Program on behalf of the Town of Bennington for \$267,197 of additional funds to construct Phase II of the Ninja Path. Phase II is the Ninja Path Project's most challenging phase and will connect the interim path north of Furnace Brook with Morse Road. It consists of a paved 1,065' shared use path, an 85' steel bridge over Furnace Brook, and 75' of boardwalk across the adjacent wetland. It will establish a safe route for walking and biking between Bennington's urban core and the Village of North Bennington, including key destinations like Bennington College and the Northside Drive/VT67A commercial corridor, a significant regional hub for economic activity.
- **Rupert/Pawlet Outdoor Recreation:** The BCRC assisted the Towns of Rupert and Pawlet on a successful application to the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Grant Program. The \$80,212 grant will be used for the D&H Rail Trail infrastructure enhancements, wayfinding signs and a welcome center feasibility study.

- **Sandgate Better Roads:** The BCRC assisted the Town of Sandgate on a successful Vermont Better Roads Grant. The \$20,000 grant will be used to bring six hydrologically connected road segments in conformance with the Municipal Roads General Permit.
- **Municipal Stormwater Master Plans:** The BCRC was awarded \$30,000 from the Vermont Clean Water Initiative Program to assist 7 towns in updating their Stormwater Master Plans and to identify one high priority project from each town for the development of grant applications and implementation.
- **Emergency Management Planning:** The BCRC applied for and received the Emergency Management Planning Grant (EMPG). This \$53,387 grant was used to increase and sustain municipalities' emergency management capabilities by assisting with developing Local Emergency Management Plans (LEMPs), providing on-boarding for new emergency management directors (EMDs), working in coordination with the local EMDs to provide up-to-date information to the state during times of crisis, and providing trainings to the EMDs regarding best practices within emergency management.
- **Bourn Brook & Lye Brook Flood Risks:** The BCRC was awarded \$94,762 from the Flood Resilient Communities Fund for the development of scoping studies to evaluate alternatives to reduce flood risks within the alluvial fans of Bourn Brook and Lye Brook in Manchester.
- **Brownfield Grants:** The BCRC received \$177,500 in Agency of Commerce and Community Development Brownfield grants. The BCRC applied to the EPA for a \$500,000 Brownfields assessment grant but was not funded. Based on comments received from our EPA Project Officer during the application de-brief, BCRC will revise and resubmit the application in the fall of 2023.
- **Lauzon Machine & Engineering Reuse:** On behalf of the potential redeveloper of the Lauzon Machine and Engineering property in Bennington, BCRC applied for and received a \$21,000 grant from the Vermont DEC Brownfields Program to conduct a supplemental Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment.
- **Pesticide Disposal Grant:** BCRC on behalf of the Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance applied for and received a grant for \$7,718.00 from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets to partially reimburse BCSWA for pesticide disposal costs from Household Hazardous Waste collections.
- **Building Communities Grants:** BCRC staff assisted two local businesses with grants to the Regional Economic Development grant program of the Building Communities Grants, overseen by the Department of Buildings and General Services. The recipients, small businesses in Pownal and Bennington, are active in agriculture (Pownal) and retail (Bennington). The funds in Pownal led to the restoration of a dilapidated structure in the Village Center, which is now the center of retail operations for a local family's meat, dairy, and produce sales. The funds in Bennington are offsetting the costs for repairs to a mixed-use structure's foundation, parking, and windows as part of a longtime tenant's recent acquisition of the building.
- **Communications Union District:** Through its longstanding partnership with the Southern Vermont Communications Union District, the BCRC worked with the CUD's private-sector partner, Consolidated Communications, to submit a successful Construction Grant application to the Vermont Community Broadband Board totaling \$9,009,085. The \$9.01m grant will

underwrite the construction of 251 miles of fiber optic cable across the region, and serve 6,412 addresses, 1,300 of which are currently underserved. The partnership provides residents in the 14 towns in Southwestern Vermont with affordable and reliable high-speed Internet.

MAPPING (GIS SERVICES)

The BCRC uses its geographic information systems capabilities to produce maps and conduct analyses in support of virtually all of its programs. RPCs also provide municipalities, state agencies, and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of their projects.

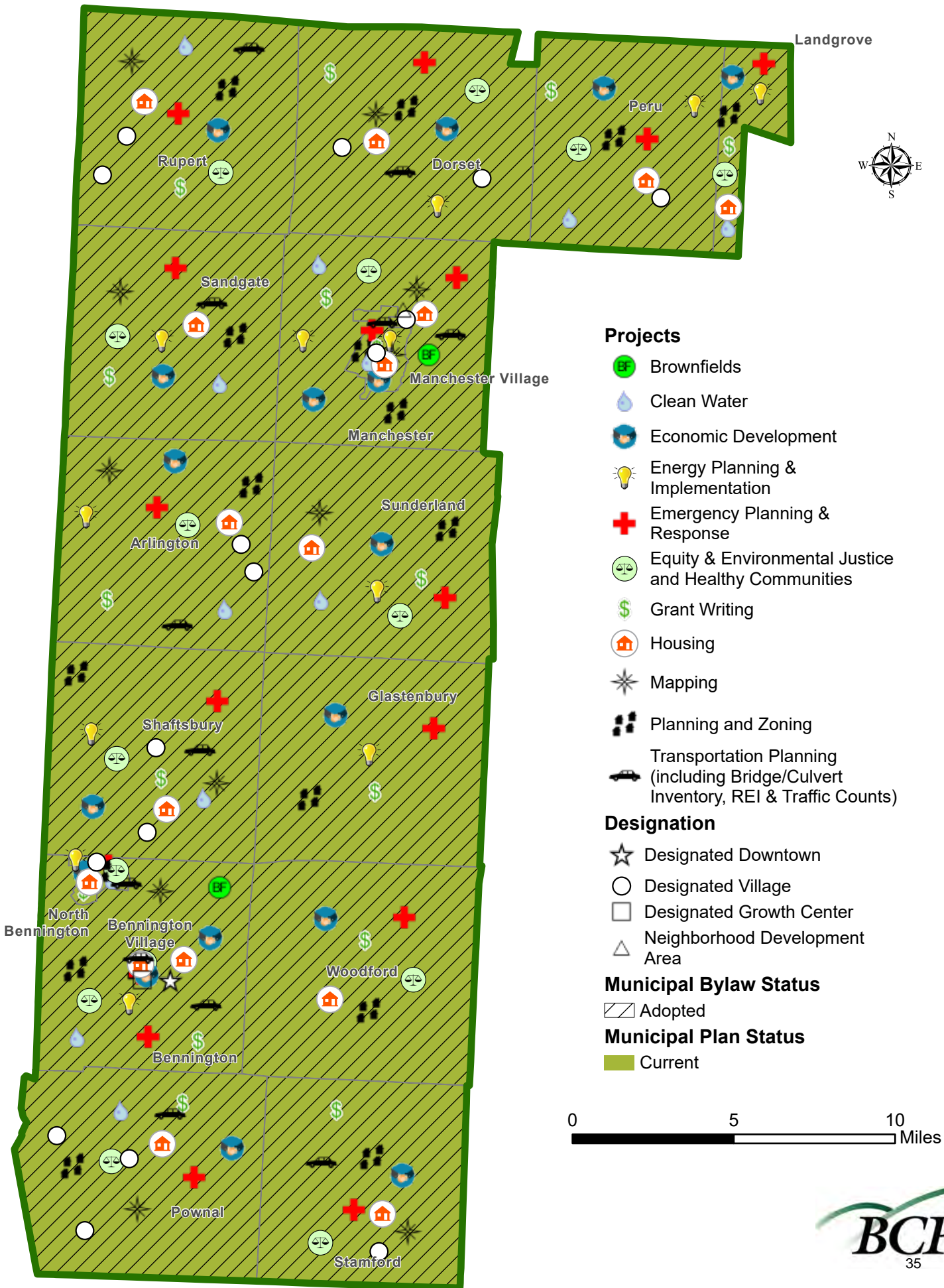
Particularly valuable GIS projects completed during the past year included:

- Project-specific mapping requests to aid in the administration of municipal zoning regulations and the application of regional land use policies to development proposals.
- Renewable energy resource maps showing locations with high potential for renewable energy development as well as areas with significant constraints to development for the municipality of Shaftsbury.
- New maps to support municipal plan updates in Sandgate and Manchester Village. These included new maps of ANR-designated forest blocks to meet the requirements of “Act 171” for forest connectivity.
- Various maps and geographic analyses in support of the Bennington downtown redevelopment project, and to support assessment of community use and reuse of the former Southern Vermont College campus and downtown Bennington Energizer complex.
- Maps to support recreation park improvements in Bennington, development, and improvement of bike-ped facilities/systems in Bennington, Pownal, Rupert, Dorset, Manchester, Manchester Village, and Arlington, and maps of regional outdoor recreation facilities including the Bennington Area Trail System (BATS) trail network.
- Mapping of municipal bridges, culverts, and road segments related to stormwater management and municipal road general permits.
- Village center, downtown, and growth center maps to support designations and renewals in Stamford, Sunderland, and Sandgate.
- Assessments of demographic and business trends to support Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone programs. Economic and community development staff now use ArcGIS Business Analyst and ArcGIS Insights software to analyze commerce and commuter trends.
- Maps depicting proposed zoning changes for Manchester, and updated zoning and design review districts for Manchester Village.
- Geographic analysis of demographics in Rupert for Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance.
- Updated maps for hazard mitigation plan in Stamford.

‘AT WORK’ MAP

The map depicting the range of services provided by the BCRC to member municipalities is included on the next page.

BCRC at Work: FY 2023



Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission

FY 2023 Annual Report

The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) is a political subdivision of the State created by the municipalities of Chittenden County in 1966 for the development of policies, plans and programs that address regional issues and opportunities in Chittenden County. Its vision is to be a pre-eminent, integrated regional organization that plans for healthy, vibrant communities, economic development, and efficient transportation of people and goods while improving the region's livability. The CCRPC serves as the region's federally designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and is responsible for comprehensive and collaborative transportation planning involving municipalities, state and federal agencies and other key stakeholders in Chittenden County. The CCRPC works to ensure implementation of the regional transportation plan and provides technical and planning assistance to its member municipalities, and the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans).

The CCRPC is governed by a 29-member board consisting of one representative from each of the County's 19 municipalities; transportation representatives from VTrans, Green Mountain Transit (GMT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Burlington International Airport (BIA), and a rail industry representative; and, at-large members representing the interests of agriculture, environmental conservation, business, and housing/socio-economic. The legislative body of each Chittenden County municipality selects its own representative and alternate. The full CCRPC selects the at-large representatives.

The CCRPC appreciates the continued opportunity to work with its municipal members to plan appropriately for the region's future to protect and improve the special quality of life that is shared throughout Chittenden County. In FY23, the CCRPC invested over \$7 million in regional land use, transportation, emergency management, energy, natural resources, public engagement, training, and technical assistance. The program leverages around \$6.5 million in Federal and State investment with \$255,408 in municipal dues and around \$250,000 in local match for specific projects—a 13:1 return on local investment.

PLANNING & ZONING

RPCs provide cost-effective professional planning staff for many of Vermont's municipalities. Work in recent years has been focused on improving town plans and local permitting through education and enhanced consultations (on-site training), bylaw modernization, facilitating transition to Development Review Boards and implementing new requirements for energy planning, forest integrity, economic development and flood resiliency planning. Current, clearly written plans and bylaws are essential to enable efficient state and local permitting. This work is supported through local and regional planning funds, municipal dues, and other grants. All technical assistance provided this year is shown on the At Work map; highlights include:

- **Town Plan Assistance:** Staff finalized the initial plan reviews for Essex, Jericho and South Burlington.
- **Town Plan Approvals:** Approved the Enhanced Energy Plan for Bolton.

- **Zoning:** CCRPC staff continued work in Bolton on zoning bylaw amendments from the Bolton Valley Master Plan. CCRPC completed work on a Form Based Code project for Williston’s Taft Corners using transportation planning funds. Charlotte was assisted with an audit of their village bylaws and with developing a work plan to support the creation of a master plan and updated zoning bylaws for both East Charlotte and West Charlotte villages. CCRPC assisted the Town of Essex with a buildout of their sewer service area. Minor zoning-related assistance was also provided to Essex Junction, Huntington, Jericho, Milton, Richmond, South Burlington, and Winooski.
- **Training:** Three Land Use Essentials trainings were held for the following audiences: Essex Junction Planning Commission and Development Review Board, Essex Town Planning Commission and Selectboard, and new municipal planning staff from ten Chittenden County municipalities. One Regional Housing Convening was held for all municipalities in the region.

RPCs also coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan, and related studies. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors.

- **ECOS Plan Implementation:** The 2018 Chittenden County ECOS Plan (Environment; Community; Opportunity; Sustainability) is the regional plan for Chittenden County and combines the Regional Plan, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy into one. The ECOS Scorecard monitors the accomplishments and progress indicators for all 17 of the ECOS goals. As an example, we’ve implemented Strategy #2 (Strive for 80% of new development in areas planned for growth, which amounts to 15% of our land area) through the zoning projects mentioned above, permit legislation, and planned transportation investments in those places resulting in 87% of residential growth in these areas (2020 5-year average). CCRPC used the ECOS Plan to evaluate applications and participate in Act 250 and Section 248 hearings. CCRPC began updating the ECOS plan for the next five years in FY 2023 for intended adoption in 2024.
- **Legislative Forum:** In December, the CCRPC hosted a [Legislative briefing](#) to serve as a forum for municipal representatives and legislators to connect on a few important topics for the upcoming legislative session, including: smart growth issues (infrastructure, permit system, housing, climate/energy, transportation); economic recovery issues (workforce, broadband); and governance/funding issues (racial equity, open meeting law, regional dispatch start-up, cannabis, transit revenue options, planning funding). CCRPC has also participated in numerous legislative initiatives including development of the HOME Act.
- **Climate Change and Land Use Regulations.** CCRPC partnered with VT Fish & Wildlife to present information on how to address climate change through land use regulations (3 presentations to a state-wide audience).

BROWNFIELDS

Vermont RPCs have sought and been awarded more than 10 million dollars for this economic development initiative. Environmental site assessments allow properties to be sold, developed or re-developed in ways that benefit the local and state economy, create or protect jobs and increase housing opportunities.

- **Chittenden County Brownfields Program:** In May 2023, CCRPC secured a competitive EPA grant of \$500,000 for Brownfields Assessment and Cleanup Planning over the next four years to aid property owners, potential developers and municipalities in investigating environmental issues before potential property redevelopment. The CCRPC has also received \$50,000 from ACCD in May 2023 for site assessment and cleanup planning with the potential to receive additional funds if more sites are identified needing such assistance.
- CCRPC obtained a \$400,000 EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant in FY16; and a \$300,000 EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant in FY18. Since the fall of 2016, using these two grants the program has provided \$586,488 to assess perceived or real contamination issues in various municipalities.
 - Bolton: 4302 Bolton Valley Access Road (Bolton Valley Resort)
 - Burlington: 316 Flynn Avenue (Redstone Apartments); 400 Pine Street/20 Howard Street (Unsworth Properties); 339 Pine Street (Railyard Enterprise Project); 56 and 58 North Avenue (Sarah Holbrook Center); Lake Street (Waterfront Park); 314 North Winooski (Champlain Transmission); 75 Briggs Street (Petra Cliffs); 207 Flynn Avenue (City Market); 453 Pine Street (near Barge Canal); 405 Pine Street (Burlington City Arts); 44 Lakeside Avenue (Blodgett Ovens / HULA); 241 N. Winooski Avenue (McClure Center); 676 Riverside Avenue / 56 Bright Street (Burlington Housing Authority); 157 South Champlain Street (former Autoclean car detail); 300 Flynn Avenue (Howard Center)
 - Colchester: 2031 Roosevelt Highway (Champlain Chiropractic); 110 Heineberg Road (New York Cleaners).
 - Essex Junction: 3 Maple Street (Chittenden Crossing) and 1 Main Street (Road Res-Q).
 - Milton: 7 River Street (Milton Grange) and 204-210 & 214-218 U.S. Route 7 (Town-VAOT “Hourglass” Road reconfiguration project).
 - Shelburne: 5531 Spear Street (Kwiniaska/Fairway at Spear).
 - South Burlington: 600 Spear Street (south of UVM Farm Barn)
 - Westford: 1705 VT Route 128 (parcel adjacent to Town Office)
 - Winooski: 4 & 12 Winooski Falls Way (south of traffic circle); City Lot 7D on Winooski Falls Way (behind CCV); 42 Pine Street (Myers Pool); City Lot 8 on Winooski Falls Way (in front of Waterworks Restaurant), and 355 Main Street (Andy’s Used Cars)
 - Outside of County: Barre – 16 Prospect Street (Bonacorsi); Montpelier - 65 Granite Shed Lane (Granite Works); Swanton – 1, 3 & 5 Canada Street (near Ace Hardware)
- CCRPC received a \$99,000 pass-thru ACCD grant from Mount Ascutney RPC for brownfields assessment and planning in late FY22. CCRPC has investigated perceived or real contamination issues at the following properties to accelerate redevelopment.
 - Burlington: 405 Pine Street (Burlington City Arts); 99 Intervale Avenue (planned Intervale Community Food Center); 168 Archibald Street (former synagogue, planned housing); 176 South Winooski Ave (former VFW, planned housing), 227-235 Main Street (mixed use)
 - Colchester: 33, 81 & 123 Ethan Allen Drive (former St. Michael's College dorms, planned 10th Cavalry apartments)
 - Essex: 104 Center Road (former auto shop, planned mixed use)
 - Milton: 25 Railroad Street (former Milton Creamery, planned mixed use)
 - Shelburne: 3164 Shelburne Road (Econo Lodge motel, planned Bay Ridge apartments):
 - South Burlington: 600 Spear Street (planned 32 apartments)
 - Westford: 1705 VT Route 128 (parcel adjacent to Town Office)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with solid planning functions. RPCs work with towns and in strong partnership with Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) to this end in several ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont for long-term economic gain.

- **Lake Champlain Byway:** Chittenden County includes eight of Lake Champlain Byway's 22 communities: Milton, Colchester, Winooski, Essex Junction, Burlington, South Burlington, Shelburne, and Charlotte. CCRPC staff maintained the Byway website including a helpful Interactive Map. Additionally, CCRPC continued funding during the summer for the Byway's audio stories App & Phone line.
- **Community Development:** CCRPC continued assisting with grant administration on behalf of the Town of Bolton on the CDBG grant for hotel and water/wastewater improvements at Bolton Valley. CCRPC continued assisting Westford with the administration of a VCDP planning grant to conceptual plan for housing and river access on a property in Westford village. CCRPC continued work as a program manager for community wastewater in Huntington including organizing Wastewater Committee meetings and providing the community with feedback on the draft Preliminary Engineering Report. CCRPC continued work as the grant administrator in two Northern Border Applications (Hinesburg water project and Winooski Main St. project). CCRPC assisted Charlotte with questions regarding village wastewater.
- **Chittenden County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy:** With federal funding from the US Economic Development Administration (EDA), CCRPC completed a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) in concert with the Addison, Rutland and Central VT regions -- collectively called the West Central Vermont CEDS. The CEDS identifies priority economic development strategies and projects and will be used by a variety of federal and state funding programs when making grant decisions. The West Central Vermont CEDS was approved by EDA in June 2023.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Through contracts with VTrans, RPCs coordinate the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort has provided a statewide framework for public and municipal involvement in planning for improvements to Vermont's transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the region's transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state, and federal transportation network improvements.

The CCRPC is the only metropolitan planning organization (MPO) operating within Vermont. MPOs are federally mandated and funded transportation planning organizations governed by representatives from local municipalities and state transportation agencies. Federal funding for transportation projects and programs is channeled through this planning process. Congress created MPOs to ensure that transportation projects and programs in urbanized areas (population greater than 50,000) are based on a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive ("3-C") planning process that serve the needs of the municipalities in the area.

Objective #1: Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions and Municipalities

TAC Activity: The TAC met 10 times in FY23. Seventeen member municipalities have been actively engaged in transportation planning and TAC attendance varied from 14 to 24 members. Nine (9) non-municipal TAC members were actively engaged in transportation planning in the county.

TAC Outcomes: The TAC approved, discussed, received presentations, and/or made recommendations on the following projects/tasks:

- VTrans Transportation Equity Framework
- 2023 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)
- Chittenden County Park & Ride Plan
- Chittenden County Active Transportation Plan
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendments
- Winooski Traffic Calming Manual
- Municipal Roads General Permit
- VPSP2 Updates
- Statewide Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan
- Burlington-Winooski Bridge Project
- FY 2024 Unified Planning Work Program
- Bicycling Lessons from the Netherlands
- Walk to Shop Project Updates
- Regional Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)
- Complete Streets Reporting
- Federal Adjusted Urban Area Boundary
- Infrastructure and National Highways System (NHS) Reliability Targets
- Milton Downtown Core Charette Project
- Burlington School District Travel Plan
- FY24-27 Transportation Improvement Program

Transportation Coordination Activities with Municipalities and VTrans Provided by CCRPC:

- Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)
- Park & Ride Plan
- Active Transportation Plan
- I-89 Study
- VPSP2
- MRGP
- Way to Go! Coordination (Park Your CARbon in 2023)
- Lake Champlain Byway coordination
- Williston Form-Based Code Project
- Williston Class 1 Reclassification Pilot

- Regional E&D Committee
- ITS Coordination
- EV-related coordination
- Municipal Project Management (MPM) for sidewalk projects (Jericho and Shelburne)
- Burlington-Winooski Bridge Project
- VT 116 and VT 2A Intersection Scoping Project
- Westford Village Stormwater Treatment Assessment
- Federal Aid Urbanized Area boundary adjustments
- Transportation Equity Framework

Objective #2: Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning

Regional Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP): The [2023 MTP](#) was adopted by the CCRPC Board on May 17, 2023.

Municipal Transportation Plans: 18 municipalities have current municipal plans that include an updated transportation component. In FY23, the CCRPC assisted two (2) municipalities (South Burlington & Jericho) with the transportation elements of their municipal plans.

Act-250 and Section 248 Reviews: In FY23, the CCRPC provided transportation related comments for three (3) Act-250 applications.

Coordination with Public Transit Providers: Staff participated in regional public transit planning activities including:

- The Elders & Persons with Disabilities Transportation Committee
- Northwest Vermont TOD RAISE Grant
- Vermont Intercity Bus Plan Advisory Committee
- Transit Finance Report coordination
- South End Multimodal Center Feasibility Study
- Williston Microtransit Study Advisory Committee
- Collaboration with GMT to include major transit routes within CCRPC's Areas Planned for Growth

RPC participation in VTrans committees: A list of committees that the CCRPC staff participated in is provided below:

- Rail Council
- VPSP2
- Vermont Highway Safety Alliance
- Way to Go
- Vermont Intercity Bus Plan
- Burlington-Winooski Bridge Project
- Public Transit Advisory Council (PTAC)
- VT Freight Working Group

Project Prioritization: The CCRPC prioritizes Capital Projects on the state's Transportation Program once a year. In addition, the CCRPC has a representative on the Core Team for the VPSP2 prioritization effort.

Objective #3: Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities

During FY23, the CCRPC hosted regional transportation meetings; initiated, managed, and was involved in major regional and local transportation plans, studies, and initiatives; provided technical assistance and support to municipalities and partners on transportation issues. Please see below for more information on these activities.

Assistance with Transportation Grants: Staff assisted municipalities and provided letters of support for (13) grant applications including Burlington Safe Streets for All (SS4A) grant & SMART grant; Williston Highway Safety Improvement Program grant; Bike/Ped grants (Hinesburg, Jericho, Milton, Shelburne, South Burlington, Burlington, Richmond); FY24 Better Roads grant support (Bolton Underhill, Essex, Milton, St. George); Transportation Alternatives Program grants (Burlington, Richmond, Shelburne, Williston, and South Burlington); Winooski River Bridge RAISE.

Budget Spent on Municipal Assistance: The CCRPC invests approximately 73% of MPO funding for municipal assistance.

CCRPC Data Collection in FY23:

- Pavement Condition Inventories were completed in Bolton, Essex Junction, and South Burlington.
- A Sidewalk condition inventory was completed in Colchester.
- An ADA inventory was conducted in Winooski.
- A sign inventory was conducted in Williston.

Participation in Transportation Planning and Project Development Activities: Below is the list of Planning Assistance, Project Definition (Scoping), water quality/transportation planning and Municipal Construction Projects (Municipal Project Management: MPM) that the CCRPC managed in FY23:

- South Burlington Climate Action Plan – Transportation Component
- Burlington Property Transportation Plan – Phase 2
- Burlington South End Multimodal Facility and TOD Study
- Multimodal Transportation Hub for Taft Corners Feasibility Study
- Burlington Impact Fee Study – Revision & Expansion
- Winooski Traffic Calming Policy
- East Charlotte Village Traffic Calming
- Winooski ADA Transition Plan - Transportation Component
- Class 1 Pilot Study – Williston
- Shelburne Bicycling and Pedestrian Connectivity Study
- Route 116 Crosswalk Scoping
- Bike/Pedestrian Bridge over I-89 Connections Study
- Evaluation of Bicycle / Pedestrian Lighting Needs Along Kennedy Drive

- South Burlington Multi-Site Crosswalk Assessment
- Intermodal connections for Burlington Amtrak
- Queen City Park Road Bike/Ped Scoping
- Richmond Village Sidewalks Scoping Study
- Colchester Middle Road Culvert Scoping
- Hollow Road and Leavenworth Road Town Bridge Feasibility
- Jericho Corners to Riverside Path Scoping
- Lafountain and Dion Street Scoping Study
- Richmond Rt 2 Shoulder Width Study
- Right-of-Way Condition Inventory for Stormwater Feasibility – Phase 3 (Burlington)
- Essex Stormwater CCTV Inspection - Phase 2 and 3
- Inspection and Inventory of Existing Stormwater System in Winooski (Phase 2)
- Colchester MRGP & Outfall Improvement Plan
- Colchester Asset Management Software BMPs
- Westford Village Stormwater Treatment Assessment
- Colchester Phosphorous Control Plan Update
- Essex Phosphorus Control Plan Treatment Practices
- Shelburne Stormwater Plan Update and Conceptual Plans.

The CCRPC managed the following multimodal Corridor and Area-wide Studies:

- Chittenden County I-89 2050 Study
- Chittenden County Active Transportation Plan
- Chittenden County Park & Ride Plan
- Richmond Bike/Ped Master Plan – Phase 2
- Winooski Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan
- Richmond Gateway Feasibility Study
- VT15 Corridor Pedestrian and Road System Study
- Battery Street Corridor Study

The CCRPC was involved in the following Transportation Demand Management (TDM) initiatives:

- CCRPC and VTrans managed the second year of [Park Your CARbon](#), formerly the Way to Go! Challenge. This outreach and education program encourages sustainable transportation by demonstrating the environmental and financial benefits of non-single occupant vehicle travel.
- The CCRPC participated in CATMA's inaugural [Transportation Summit](#) and their [Transportation Coordinator](#) (TC) Network program and events to learn from other TC Network members about TDM benefits and programs.

Road Erosion Inventories in Support of Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP): CCRPC staff continued to work with all Chittenden County municipalities on meeting their MRGP obligations. This includes evaluating segments through Road Erosion Inventories (REIs), tracking and documenting upgraded segments and outlets, and reporting to DEC (see [REI dashboard here](#), click on upper right for

individual municipalities). Staff also assists municipalities with the State's Grants in Aid (GIA) program, which allocates funding to participating towns for stormwater improvements related to the MRGP. In FY23, 14 Chittenden County municipalities signed up to participate in the GIA program. An estimated 33 non-compliant segments will be upgraded using the allocated \$410,000.

Objective #4: Advance VTrans Strategic and Long-Range Transportation Plans

CCRPC Data Collection Activities Conducted Specifically for VTrans: CCRPC staff conducted the following activities in support of VTrans' Plans:

- Park and Ride counts completed in July, October, and February
- 37 ATRs in Burlington, South Burlington, Richmond, Williston, Westford, Winooski, Essex, and Shelburne
- 6 turning movements counts in Burlington and South Burlington.

Objective #5: Provide a Mechanism for Improved Public Outreach and Education: CCRPC staff conducted the following outreach/education activities beyond that of routine task efforts:

- Burlington-Winooski Bridge Project funded partially through a RAISE Grant: The CCRPC is assisting VTrans and its consultant (HNTB) to plan outreach to underserved populations in Winooski and Burlington.

EMERGENCY PLANNING & RESPONSE

RPCs play key roles in the mitigation and preparedness phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont Emergency Management, the Vermont Homeland Security Unit, VTrans and the Agency of Natural Resources. RPCs provide direct staff to the State Emergency Operations Center when needed, administrative support to the Local Emergency Planning Committees, and coordination among responders and planners throughout the State's four Public Safety Districts. RPCs also help update floodplain bylaws and FEMA-required hazard mitigation plans, coordinate updates to municipal emergency operations plans and assisted as needed in special circumstances like Tropical Storm Irene and other disasters.

- **FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation:** CCRPC collected information from each municipality on annual implementation of hazard mitigation activities recommended in the County and Municipal All-Hazard Mitigation Plans.
- **Local Emergency Management Plans:** 19 out of 19 (100%) municipalities in the CCRPC region currently have completed their updated local emergency management plan. CCRPC is working with Buel's Gore to complete the LEMP signature page. Once that is submitted to VEM all Chittenden County municipalities will have adopted LEMPS.
- **Regional Emergency Planning Committee:** CCRPC continued to staff the Regional Emergency Management Committee (REMC) which consists of two representatives from each municipality and others involved in emergency management in Chittenden County. The purpose of the REMC is to coordinate and support regional all-hazard emergency planning and preparedness activities to improve the region's ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from all disasters.
- **Local Liaison:** CCRPC served as a key coordinator between municipalities and the state to collect damage assessment information after significant storm events.

- **Hazardous Materials:** Helped with emergency preparedness for hazardous materials incidents by exported the Tier data for Chittenden County from Tier II Submit to a table format and provided a list of facilities and chemicals to each EMD in the county.
- **All Hazard Mitigation Plan:** CCRPC assisted IEM, a national consulting firm, with completion of the 2022 Chittenden County Multi-Jurisdictional All-Hazards Mitigation Plan and its municipal annexes except for Colchester which developed its own stand-alone Local Hazards Mitigation Plan.
- **Flood Hazard and River Corridor Bylaws.** CCRPC reviewed the flood hazard and River Corridor bylaws for 19 out of 19 (100%) of our municipalities to ensure conformance with minimum National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and State standards.

MAPPING

In addition to enhancing the RPC work, RPCs provide municipalities, state agencies and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of their projects.

- **Town-Specific Web Maps:** Updated/created interactive town-specific web maps, story maps, or dashboards for Bolton, Buel's Gore, Charlotte, Essex, Essex Junction, Huntington, Jericho, Richmond, and Shelburne.
- **Regional Web Maps:** Updated the ECOS Map Viewer, River Corridor Planning map viewer, regional bike facilities, broadband status and Permit Review map viewer with more current data. Developed a [Housing Dashboard](#) for viewing the location and type of housing in each municipality.
- **Town Plan Maps:** Updated maps for the Jericho Town Plan.
- **GIS Data:** Developed or updated numerous GIS datasets (ash tree inventories, MUTCD sign inventories, zoning, culverts, housing points, scenic resources, state designations, trails, conserved land, utilities, etc,) for Bolton, Charlotte, Colchester, Essex Junction, Huntington, Jericho, Milton, Richmond, Shelburne, South Burlington, Williston, and for the region. Utilized ESRI's Business Analyst tool to provide South Burlington with demographic and employment information. Provided Essex Junction with a map for understanding Cannabis Regulation.
- **Colchester Map Service:** Continued to provide updates to the Colchester map service which links to the Town's VueWorks Asset Management system.
- **Regional Conservation Area Project:** Continued to participate in the Champlain Valley Partnership and provide mapping support for defining a focus area for identifying potential conservation projects in South Burlington, Hinesburg, St. George, Shelburne, and Williston.
- **Data available via Vermont Open Data Portal:** Uploaded housing points and municipal zoning and overlay data to the portal to allow public access to the GIS data.
- **VT Culverts:** The VT Culverts website can be used to view a town's bridges and culverts on a map, or in a chart based on condition or inventory date. CCRPC staff is one of two RPCs that manage the website. VT Culverts continues to gain traction in our region and throughout the state. At the end of June, 9 of our municipalities have actively used VT Culverts to inventory town-maintained bridges and culverts.

ENERGY PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION

A renewed focus on clean, renewable, sustainable and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunity and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation and natural resources efforts, and work with municipalities to assist with project implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process.

- **Regional Energy Plan:** The *2018 Chittenden County ECOS Plan* was granted an Affirmative Determination of Energy Compliance by the Department of Public Service on August 9, 2018. CCRPC has increased participation in PUC proceedings (applications for Certificates of Public Good and various investigations) to ensure that local and regional policies are recognized. CCRPC participated in 7 PUC proceedings in FY22.
- **Municipal Energy Plans:** The CCRPC board granted affirmative determinations of energy compliance to enhanced energy plans in Bolton. Fourteen municipalities have adopted enhanced energy plans. CCRPC assisted South Burlington in development and adoption of a Climate Action Plan and a supplemental implementation plan focus on the transportation sector.
- **Energy Planning Implementation:** The CCRPC provided information regarding the federal Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program, the Inflation Reduction Act, and electric vehicle incentives to municipal stakeholders. CCRPC provided technical support to municipalities regarding the state-wide Municipal Energy Resilience Program for municipal buildings.
- **State Energy Planning:** CCRPC has provided input into the state Comprehensive Energy Plan update; gave feedback to the PUC on new net metering rules; and assisted in hosting a local input meeting. CCRPC has also participated in a working group to update Act 174 standards for regional and municipal energy plans and served on VLCT's environment policy committee.

CLEAN WATER

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to assist with completion of the EPA-required watershed tactical basin plans. RPCs also work with municipalities to implement river corridor assessments in local planning and regulations for better and safer growth management decisions.

- **Clean Water:** The CCRPC continued to host the Clean Water Advisory Committee and the MS-4 Sub-Committee and provide guidance to the State on disposition of the Vermont Clean Water Fund. CCRPC staff also sit on the Lake Champlain Sea Grant Program Advisory Committee, and managed Design Implementation Block Grant projects on behalf of select towns to design stormwater treatment practices. The CCRPC supported education programs such as the Rethink Runoff on behalf of nine of our municipalities, assisted with watershed resiliency mapping, and participated in water quality-focused policy discussions. CCRPC appoints representatives to three different Basin Water Quality Councils which work with their Clean Water Service Providers (CWSP) to oversee the development and implementation of non-regulatory water quality improvement projects that reduce phosphorus loading into these streams and Lake Champlain. These three Councils are the Basin 5 Water Quality Council (BWQC) for the Northern Lake Champlain Direct Drainages, the Basin 7 Water Quality Council for the Lamoille River

watershed and the Basin 8 Water Quality Council for the Winooski watershed. Bolton is in Basin 8. Additionally, CCRPC is the designated CWSP for Basin 5.

- **Block Grants:** Through funding provided by the DEC and administered by the Mount Ascutney Regional Planning Commission, the CCRPC managed Design Implementation Block Grants to implement the following stormwater projects: in Burlington, managed a grant to create a new gravel wetland to treat runoff from both the Champlain Housing Trust property and the Market 32 / Price Chopper property near Shelburne Road and assisted the Town of Hinesburg with management of a grant to design, permit, and construct a treatment practice to address stormwater runoff from the former Saputo Cheese Factory.
- **Water Quality Outreach:** CCRPC is managing, with all RPCs as sub-grantees, a grant provided from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to conduct a multi-pronged outreach effort focused on improving water quality in compliance with the Vermont Clean Water Act (VCWA). CCRPC continues work with municipal staff and boards to provide information about the requirements for municipalities triggered by the VCWA and also work with them on options such as stronger municipal protections against flood hazards and river corridor erosion, stormwater master planning, and other town plan or zoning changes to improve water quality.
- **Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP) Compliance and Water Quality Planning Assistance:** CCRPC staff continued to work with all Chittenden County municipalities on meeting their MRGP obligations. This includes evaluating segments through Road Erosion Inventories (REIs), tracking and documenting upgraded segments and outlets, and reporting to DEC (see REI dashboard here, click on upper right for individual municipalities). Staff also assists municipalities with the State's Grants in Aid (GIA) program, which allocates funding to participating towns for stormwater improvements related to the MRGP. In FY23, 14 Chittenden County municipalities signed up to participate in the GIA program. An estimated 33 non-compliant segments will be upgraded using the allocated \$410,000.

EQUITY & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE & HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

- **Public Engagement and Racial Equity:** The CCRPC continued to build organizational capacity to address systemic racism and inequities in our communities through the following actions:
 - Hired a full time Equity & Engagement Manager to lead organizational and project-specific equity and racial justice efforts.
 - Facilitated and provided educational opportunities for our staff, municipalities, and other local and regional partners.
 - Strengthened existing relationships and partnerships and forged new ones with community organizations, grassroots organizers, and individuals working directly with marginalized communities.
 - Supported and facilitated an [Equity Advisory Committee](#) to guide CCRPC's equity work.
 - Drafted an organizational Equity Statement and Equity Action Plan building off of recommendations from the Creative Discourse Group's [Organizational Equity Assessment](#).
 - Began to explore and design a community capacity building grant program using FHWA funds to increase trust, education, and participation from marginalized communities in CCRPC's transportation decision-making.

- **Building Homes Together:** The Building Homes Together campaign is a collaboration between CCRPC, Champlain Housing Trust, and Evernorth that focuses on the production of much-needed housing in Chittenden County through outreach, education, and advocacy efforts. The Building Homes Together 2.0 campaign was launched in fall 2021 with the goal of building 5,000 homes by 2025 for people of all incomes, including at least 1,250 affordable homes. Review the latest housing data, infographics, and press releases [here](#).
- **Public Health:** A grant from the Vermont Department of Health enabled CCRPC to work with all the RPCs in the state and Vermont Health Department staff to create the Vermont Health Equity Planning Toolkit. CCRPC hosted a training on the healthy equity toolkit for the Planning Advisory Committee, shared health equity project information with the CCRPC's Equity Advisory Committee (EAC) and worked with the EAC as part of toolkit implementation. CCRPC staff also developed an online Chittenden County Equity Mapping Tool showing a collection of maps on race, disability, poverty status, and English ability.
- **Chittenden County Communications Union District (CUD):** CCRPC assisted [the CUD](#) as they started up to plan, contract, build, and manage infrastructure for high-speed internet access throughout Chittenden County. Mission Broadband was hired for consulting and project management services in June.

REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION RESPONSE TO JULY 2023 FLOODS

In response to the July 2023 flooding, CCRPC staff fulfilled duties required under the MOU with Vermont Emergency Management (staffing the State Emergency Operations Center and collecting information on damages). In addition, CCRPC directly assisted town zoning staff in Bolton, Richmond and Milton with completing substantial damage assessments. As part of the Agency of Natural Resources' Flood Hazard Bylaw Update Services contract, CCRPC will continue to review municipal floodplain regulations, help municipalities update them to current NFIP minimums, and support municipalities who wish to implement additional protections. Finally, CCRPC disseminated information about flooding and recovery, which included publishing a page of flood disaster recovery resources for municipalities on its website, and connected municipal officials with the SEOC and other state and federal contacts and resources to coordinate financial and logistical assistance.

ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING

The CCRPC receives most of its funding through performance-based grants and contracts with the state. Town assessments constitute a small but very important percentage of our funding. Individual municipalities also contribute match dollars for some federally funded transportation planning projects within their own borders. For FY23, the CCRPC's total budgeted revenue of over \$7.9 million dollars was derived from over 71% federally funded grants, 25% state funding, and 4% from municipalities and non-profit organizations. Over \$5.2 million, nearly 65% of the total budgeted funding, was passed through to consultants or sub-grantees.

All of the CCRPC's revenue sources are tied to federal, state, or municipal agreements with scopes of work, guidelines and/or performance measures. CCRPC works with our members and VTrans to decide the best way to invest our MPO funding annually in developing our Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Municipal dues, and the funding received through the CCRPC's performance agreement with ACCD, are also necessary to provide matching funds required by grantors. The grants we receive enable

us to work with our municipalities on areas such as transportation, emergency planning, community development, brownfields redevelopment, energy, public health, and natural resources. Revenue from federal and state grantors typically requires non-federal matching funds. Required match ranges from 10 percent (transportation planning) to 50 percent (Emergency Management Planning Grant).

The CCRPC conducts a single audit on an annual basis. The federal single audit field work was conducted in September 2022, with the full report to be completed by November 2022.

‘AT WORK’ MAP

The map depicting the range of services provided by the CCRPC to member municipalities is included on the next page.



Projects

- Brownfields
- Clean Water
- Economic Development
- Energy Planning & Implementation
- Emergency Planning & Response
- Equity & Environmental Justice and Healthy Communities
- Grant Writing
- Housing
- Mapping
- Planning and Zoning
- Transportation Planning (including Bridge/Culvert Inventory, REI & Traffic Counts)

Designation

- Designated Downtown
- Designated Village
- Designated Growth Center
- Neighborhood Development Area
- New Town Center

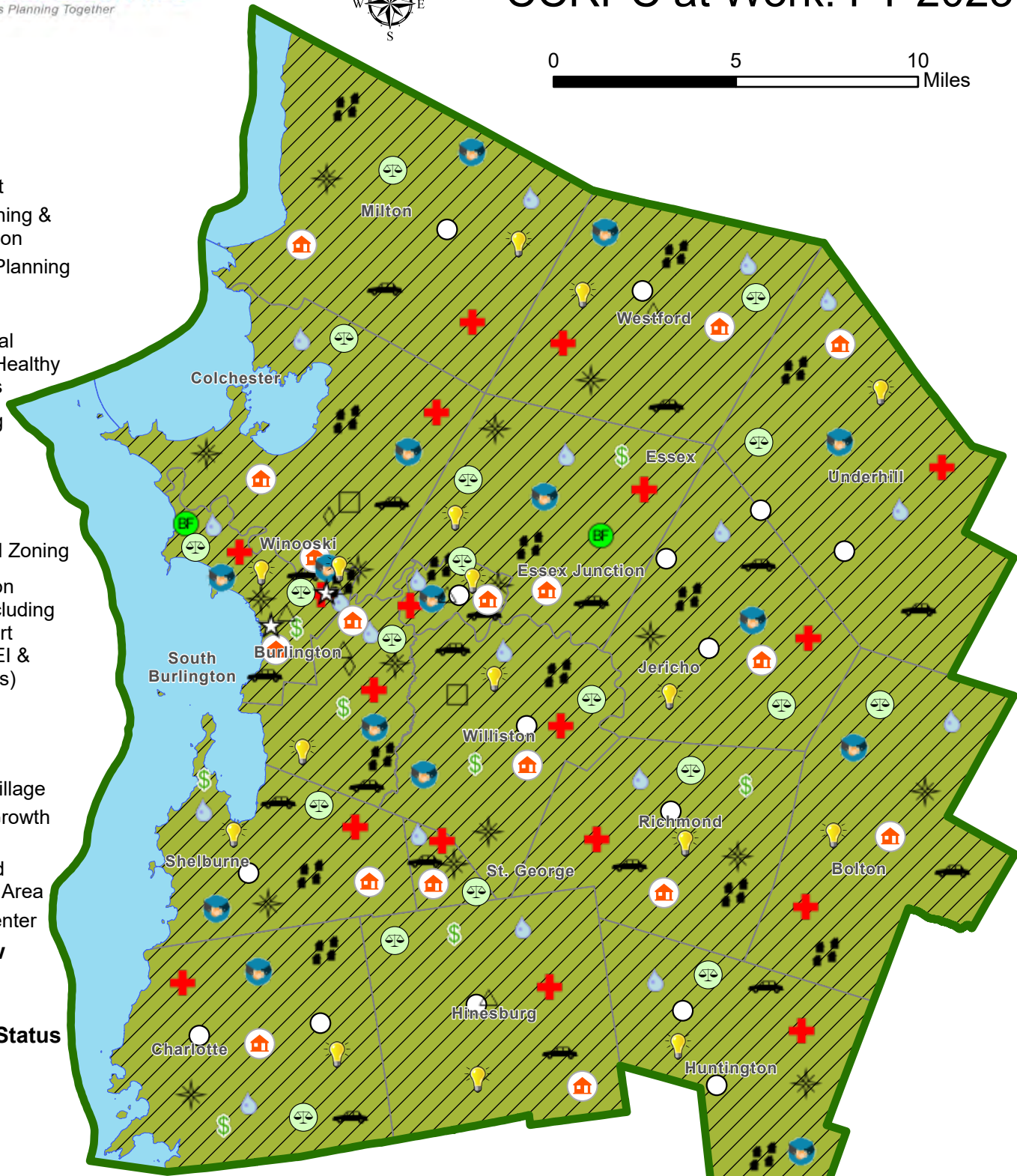
Municipal Bylaw Status

- Adopted

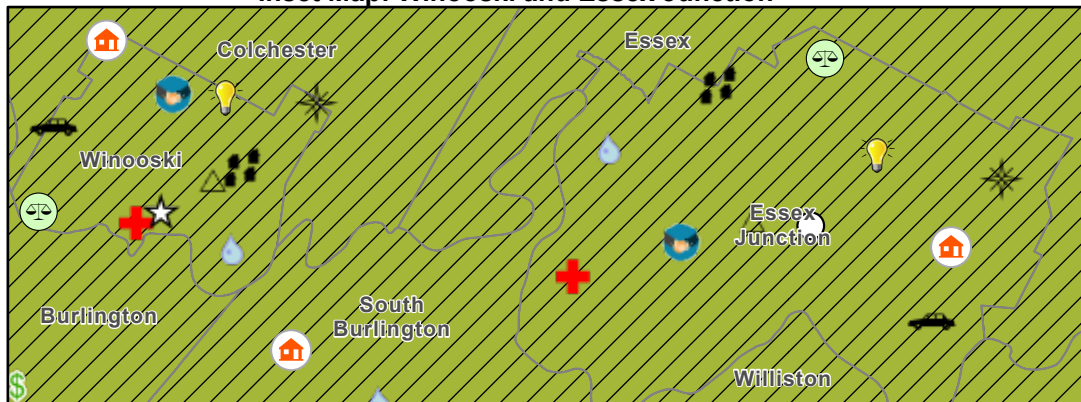
Municipal Plan Status

- Current
- No Town Plan

0 5 10 Miles



Inset Map: Winooski and Essex Junction



Buels Gore

Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission

FY 2023 Annual Report

Founded in 1967, the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) leverages the power of people working together to assist its 23 member-municipalities in providing effective local government and to work cooperatively to address regional issues. CVRPC is governed by representatives from the 20 municipalities of Washington County and Orange, Washington, and Williamstown in Orange County. Each legislative body selects a representative to the Commission.

PLANNING & ZONING

RPCs act as a cost-effective professional planning staff for many of Vermont's municipalities. Work in recent years has focused on improving town plans and local permitting through education, enhanced consultations (on-site training), bylaw modernization, facilitating transition to Development Review Boards and implementing new requirements for economic development and flood resiliency planning. Current and clear plans and bylaws are essential in smooth state and local permitting. This work is supported through local and regional planning funds, local contributions and other grants. All technical assistance provided this year is shown on the At Work map; highlights include:

- **Municipal Plans:** Met with four municipalities to discuss the process and requirements for updating their municipal plans, provided town-specific demographic data to one town for their update efforts and worked closely with another town (Middlesex) guiding them through a natural resource planning process, which resulted in an updated Natural Resource Chapter.
- **Municipal Plan Approvals/Confirmations/Energy Certifications:** Approved and confirmed five municipal plans and planning processes and additionally issued one Determination of Energy Compliance.
- **Zoning:** Undertook research and provided one planning commission with regulatory approaches for specific uses; drafted flood hazard, river corridor and cannabis zoning amendments for one town for planning commission consideration; aided one town with substantial document formatting for hearing processes preparation; presented new zoning changes to a select board in preparation of formal hearing and adoption process.
- **State Designations:** Presented Village Center Designation information to one town. Assisted four municipalities with Village Center Designation applications. Organized one Tax Credit Presentation Village Center implementation. Provided preliminary support and information to one town about Downtown Designation program and application process.
- **Training and Education:** Held two Planning & Zoning Forums and two town-specific presentations designed to build knowledge of current and emerging planning issues reaching over 40 municipal officials in at least 16 municipalities. Provided one-on-one assistance to two towns as they navigated Section 248 and 248a process. Provided one-on-one training to two zoning administrators and one town clerk to aid in the effective administration of the local permit process. Meet one-on-one with municipal planning commissioners to educate them about local roles and regional participation.

- **Capital Improvement Planning:** Helped enable Orange to draft their first capital improvement plan by acting as project manager. Provided Plainfield with guidance on how they can develop a comprehensive capital planning process.
- **Recreation Planning:** Served as steering committee member and resource in the Marshfield Recreation Economy for Rural Communities planning process.

RPCs also coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan and related studies. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors.

In FY23, CVRPC continued efforts on the Regional Plan update including collaborating with RPCs statewide to develop a methodology for consistent land use designations on the Future Land Use Map.

CVRPC also focused on plan implementation. A sampling of activities includes:

- Monitored Act 250 and Section 248 applications
- Started work on the regional plan update including gathering data, drafting chapters, and developing and outreach and communication plan.

BROWNFIELDS

Vermont RPCs have sought and have been awarded over 10 million dollars for this economic development initiative. Environmental site assessments allow properties to be sold, developed or re-developed in ways that benefit the local and state economy, create or protect jobs and increase housing opportunities.

In FY23, CVRPC facilitated the completion of a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment and Corrective Action Plan on behalf of the Turning Point Center of Central Vermont. Brownfield funds will help in the process of transforming this Barre City property into a model recovery center for adults. Turning Point helps people find, maintain, and enhance their substance abuse recovery through peer-based recovery supports, by providing educational programs, and acting as a safe haven for sober recreation and social activities. CVRPC also enrolled an underutilized property in Northfield which will be developed into a multi-unit housing. Assessment work will be underway in FY24.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with solid planning functions. RPCs work with towns and in strong partnership with Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) to this end in a number of ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont for long term economic gain.

- **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy:** CVRPC led an engagement and comment process with commissioners, identifying concerns and working to integrate local needs in the

West Central Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The CEDS is a partnership among RPCs and RDCs in Central Vermont, Rutland, Addison, and Chittenden Counties, and the Vermont Department of Economic Development. The effort focuses on economic development strategies. A CEDS unlocks future federal EDA investments for infrastructure development, job creation, and revolving loan funds. The CEDS was adopted by CVRPC and its partners and subsequently received federal Economic Development Administration approval.

- **Grant Writing and Administration:** Consulted with the Town of Berlin on a Northern Borders Regional Commission Catalyst Program application to expand water infrastructure to support further growth in their New Town Center. Administered a USDA Rural Development grant for the Plainfield Co-op to study the organization's financial feasibility and build a more financially stable future.
- **Broadband Development:** Provided administrative support to CVFiber, Central Vermont's Communications Union District. CVFiber has initiated the construction of fast, affordable broadband in the region.
- **Housing Development:** Created a 28-slide housing profile for the City of Montpelier
- **Healthy Communities:** Served as core leadership member of THRIVE (Central Vermont Community Health Equity Partnership backbone). Work foci included the drafting and adoption of an equity commitment for THRIVE following frontline community engagement and trainings; establishment of a committee of frontline residents to distribute \$25,000 of community funding to nine central VT community organizations. Worked with other RPCs to build a health equity toolkit for municipal and regional planning. Conducted health equity trainings and targeted conversations with Commission, Transportation Advisory, and Central VT Mobility Committees. Subsequent outreach and support resulted in Marshfield and Berlin participating in the Vermont Healthy Communities Technical Assistance Pilot focused on increasing pedestrian access around town and a four-season community recreation and energy generation project respectively. Developed three phase regional project focused on healthy food access and mobility for 2024 implementation. Supported coordination of acute and long-term response to temporary housing exodus and spike in unhoused community members in Montpelier, Barre City, Berlin, and Barre Town in partnership with municipalities and regional community health partners.
- **Tourism:** Participated and Green Mountain Byway Steering Committee and worked to advance byway promotion.
- **Regional Project Prioritization:** Coordinated with municipalities, regional non-profits, and CVEDEC to set regional priorities among economic development projects. The regional project list serves as an investment guide for the State.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Through contract with the VTrans, RPCs coordinate the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort has provided a statewide framework for public involvement in planning the improvements to Vermont's transportation system, with local communities represented through regional

Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the state's transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state and federal transportation network advancement.

Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions and Municipalities

- Held ten Transportation Advisory Committee meetings, with 19 municipalities regularly attending and engaging in the TPI. Meetings included regular attendance by GMT, VTRANS and various other institutional partners. TAC meetings provide an opportunity to gather community expertise and guide regional transportation planning.
- Coordinated activities between municipalities and VTrans, including the regional mobility committee, new project summaries, and regional transit coordination.
- Reviewed VTrans sponsored projects for regional and municipal concerns and participated VTrans led project meetings. Coordinated the completion of VTrans new project summaries with municipalities.

Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning

- Maintained a current regional transportation plan (within 8 years).
- Reviewed Act 250 applications; no comments required relating to transportation.
- Reviewed Section 248 applications; no comments required relating to transportation.
- Coordinated activities in support of regional public transit providers, including representing Washington County on the GMT Board, and regular regional mobility committee meetings.
- Participated in VTrans Advisory Committee meetings, including the Knapp Airport Master Plan Advisory Committee.
- Aggregated data on municipal transportation assets, existing Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment (EVSE) infrastructure, and existing renewable generation towards developing a regional approach to municipal fleet efficiency/electrification and regional EVSE planning.

Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities

- Assisted ten municipalities with transportation related grant applications.
- Served on the Berlin Fisher Road Complete Streets study steering committee providing technical assistance on bike and pedestrian planning.
- Attended VTrans Trestle #308s kick-off meeting in support of town
- Assisted and drafted a funding narrative for the Town of Orange to successfully apply for the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside grant for a village sidewalk scoping study
- Provided support to Warren for the successful Sugarbush Access Path grant application
- Completed one municipal transportation related feasibility/project definition study for Northfield to study the Northfield Falls intersection for pedestrian improvements. Successfully assisted the municipality apply for and receive funding to implement the recommendations.

- Assisted Waitsfield, the Mad River Valley Planning District, VTrans and the project consultant to refine intersection improvement scoping at Route 100 and Route 17. This regional priority project will study the intersection for opportunities to better integrate pedestrian and bike users and address safety concerns.
- Inventoried ash trees in the highway right of way in Roxbury and assisted the Town with development of a draft ash tree management plan. The arrival of Emerald Ash Borer means municipal costs for debris removal will increase substantially.

Deliver Results that Advance VTrans Strategic and Long Range Transportation Plans

- Conducted 29 data collection activities specifically for VTrans (traffic counts, park and ride surveys, pedestrian counts, etc.)

Provide a Mechanism for Improved Public Outreach and Education

- Facilitated meetings of the Central Vermont Mobility Committee (formerly the Regional Elderly and Disabled Persons Advisory Committee) to discuss service and rider engagement strategies.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND DISASTER RESILIENCY

RPCs play key roles in the preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont Emergency Management (VEM), the Vermont Homeland Security Unit, Department of Public Safety, VTrans, the Agency of Natural Resources, and Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs). RPCs provide direct staff to the State Emergency Operations Center, administrative support to the LEPCs and coordination among responders, municipal officials, and planners throughout the State's four Public Safety Districts. RPCs also help update floodplain bylaws, river corridor regulations, and FEMA-required hazard mitigation plans. RPCs coordinate updates to municipal emergency plans and assist as needed in special circumstances like the July 2023 flooding and other federally and non-federally declared disasters. The RPCs are a source of technical support and information and provide coordination and collaboration for trainings, workshops and seminars, often in conjunction with partners.

- **Local Hazard Mitigation Plans (LHMPs) & Implementation:** Assisted Orange and Fayston to complete Local Hazard Mitigation Plans. Integrated extreme temperature planning, climate resilience, and frontline community impacts into LHMPs. Of the Region's 23 municipalities 16 have a FEMA-approved plan. Hosted a workshop and presented on the Transportation Resilience Planning Tool (TRPT) and how it can be incorporated into Local Hazard Mitigation Plans.
- **Local Emergency Management Plans:** Assisted 23 municipalities with plan development, 20 of 21 plans submitted, and accepted by Vermont Emergency Management by end of FY23.
- **Planning Assistance:** Met with Cabot Selectboard to discuss dam removal options for the Clark Sawmill Dam that is listed on town LHMP. Met with Waterbury to discuss LHMP support

for town attempt to complete in house. Created and distributed ERAF reports to 19 municipalities. Provided municipalities hazard plan templates.

- **Grant Writing and Administration:** Supported Plainfield in their successful Hazard Mitigation Grant Application to FEMA to rebuild the Brook Road bridge to address regular flooding at this location. Supported Calais in grant administration for the Kent Hill Road culver redesign scoping study.
- **State Support:** Provided State Emergency Operation Center (SEOC) support by contacting towns to ascertain damages and by acting as supplemental staff to the SEOC Situational Awareness Unit. Attended stakeholder meetings and provided input in the State Hazard Mitigation Plan process. Attended the State Threat Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment workshop. Provided administrative support and scheduled speakers for Central Vermont Regional Emergency Management Committee (REMC). Three meetings were held in FY23.
- **Pandemic Support and Response:** Coached municipalities on identifying needs and priorities for investment American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and on compliance with ARPA requirements. Supported towns in reporting on ARPA awards. Helped the City of Barre in stakeholder engagement forum for spending ARPA awards.
- **Local Liaison:** Completed the local liaison duties for the 12/23/22 storm. Staff contacted all municipalities to gather information on existing outages, shelters and warming centers, road and infrastructure damage, and private damages if known. Transferred info to Vermont Emergency Management.
- **Other Local Support:** Assisted Capital Fire Mutual Aid to meet Vermont Open Meeting Law requirements by hosting minutes and documents on CVRPC's website.

MAPPING

RPCs provide municipalities, state agencies and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of their projects.

- Updated zoning data and / or maps for Barre Town, Cabot, East Montpelier, Middlesex, Montpelier, Plainfield
- Created the following (print) maps:
 - Village Designation: Cabot, Plainfield, Williamstown, Worcester.
 - Ash Tree Inventory: Roxbury
 - Bridge and Culvert Inventory: Fayston, Middlesex
 - Local Hazard Mitigation Plan: Fayston and Orange.
- Produced custom maps for Barre Town, Berlin, Montpelier, Moretown, Plainfield, Roxbury.
- Updated Web Maps for the Towns of Calais and Orange to facilitate public access to spatial data.
- Created a Web Map for the Town of Middlesex focused on recreation planning and natural resource management.
- Collected global positioning system (GPS) data for trails in the Orange Town Forest.

- Developed a sidewalks dataset for the region and produced custom sidewalk maps for all member municipalities.
- Met with Town of Berlin staff to discuss the use of GIS in field surveys and asset planning.
- Participated in statewide coordination meetings to discuss data standards for parcel boundaries and zoning districts.

ENERGY PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION

RPCs integrate energy planning with emergency management, land use, transportation, and natural resources efforts. Staff worked with municipalities, including supporting 19 municipal energy committees and coordinators, supporting strategic planning, technical analyses, project development and implementation, community engagement and event planning, recruitment, etc. (see below). RPCs work closely with local, regional, and statewide partners to rapidly update and develop tools, resources, and programs to help municipalities take advantage of evolving funding landscapes and meet longstanding physical and social infrastructure needs and goals to reduce energy burden, emissions, and promote community-scale energy equity and resilience. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local, regional, and state levels to inform permitting process as well as towards GHG emissions, energy equity, reliability, and resilience goals.

Enhanced Energy Plans & Certifications: CVRPC Assisted Middlesex and Waitsfield to finalize their Plans. Issued Determinations of Energy Compliance for Woodbury's Plan, providing the municipality with substantial deference in Section 248 proceedings. Created Municipal Enhanced Energy Plan Starter Kit and met with municipalities to kick-off the enhanced energy planning process including East Montpelier, Worcester, Marshfield, Duxbury, Williamstown, Warren, and Moretown, among others.

Municipal Project Development and Support:

- Supported BGS ACT 172 Municipal Energy Resilience Grant Program development and rollout; integration of regional energy goals into municipal approach and development of workflow webinars, website, outreach plan and campaigns, and data templates, resulted in high town engagement ahead of FY 24 launch. Of 23 municipalities, 21 have been responsive. Staff are supporting aggregating priorities, projects, and data.
- Applied to Department of Energy/National Renewable Energy Laboratory cohorts: Implement on-site clean energy procurement strategy, and Incorporating Community Voices in Clean Energy Planning and Deployment cohorts. CVRPC has been accepted to both to support regional approach to municipal procurement and energy planning community engagement in FY24.
- Supported Northfield EVSE application to Vermont Council Rural Development Climate Catalysts Innovation Fund (awarded)

- Supported and coordinated applications to the VCRD Climate Resilience Communities program (Northfield, WEC, East Montpelier, and Mad River Ridge to River applied; Northfield selected for Community Visit).
- Provided technical analyses, coordinated with utility and industry as well as school and public stakeholders on specific fuel-switching, and on-site generation and storage project development (Barre City, Berlin, Duxbury, Montpelier/Roxbury Schools, Northfield, Orange, Plainfield, Marshfield, Waitsfield, Warren, Washington, and Worcester).
- Facilitated development of local public/nonprofit/private partnerships to develop revolving and gap funds to cover upfront costs of residential weatherization services and/or door-to-door support with existing services and programs for residents with low and moderate income (Middlesex, Roxbury, Waitsfield, Montpelier).
- Supported two Central Vermont WindowDressers campaigns (Montpelier/Barre City and Mad River Valley+Middlesex) by connected WindowDressers campaign with Capstone Community Action services among other regional partners. Resulted in 75 volunteers built 258 storm window inserts for 40 households including 86 inserts provided for free of charge to ten income eligible households (Montpelier/Barre City); 68 volunteers built 125 storm window inserts for 21 households including three income eligible households who received the inserts free of charge (via Middlesex Community fund and MRV Interfaith Council) (Warren, Waitsfield, Middlesex, Moretown, and Fayston).
- Applied to VCRD Climate Catalysts Innovation Grant (awarded \$4,000)- developed regional effort to expand the impact of community builds as a platform to further connect vulnerable residents to weatherization services, solicit community feedback and engagement on energy and resilience initiatives, and more.
- Closed-Loop Network Geothermal/Thermal Networks Working Group (EAN), Core Member: attended monthly meetings, which included reviewing best practices learned from feasibility studies and developing Vermont-specific site/project suitability criteria, finance/ownership models, and community toolkit; identified several projects in initial phases as potential pilots (Barre City, Berlin, Norwich).
- Coordinated and submitted initial application materials on behalf of Washington County Courts to the US Department of Energy (DOE) for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant valued at ~\$76k.

Training& Education: Increased energy communications with municipalities via Energy e-digest and listserv and weekly announcements in addition to target outreach, subscription has increased by 92 net contacts in the past year. Topical digests included: funding and programs updates.

- Accepted and presented pitch at EAN's September Summit: [Re]Imagining Community Resilience Hubs in Vermont: Shifting Power to Communities. Resulted in participation as community partner in Middlebury College Capstone wherein students developed and adapted the resilience hub model to Vermont rural communities via a needs assessments and templates for upgrades. Results included literature review on disparities in rural energy, social, and community infrastructure and adaptability of community resilience hub model;

and webinar to support drawdown of federal energy infrastructure funds to municipalities: Community Led Resilience Hubs for VECAN Winter Workshops Series with VCRD (54 attendees participated).

Data and Standards:

- Collaborated with other RPCs, State agencies, VCGI, and Efficiency Vermont on updates to energy planning standards (Act 174), mapping tools, and the LEAP regionalization analysis and Generation Scenarios tools.
- Participated in Middlebury College's Environmental Capstone as a community partners: developed a municipal energy use baseline and tracking template to support Enhanced Energy Planning, tracking implementation, developing a county-wide GHG inventory, and to qualify towns for energy assessments via the Municipal Energy Resilience Grant Program.
- Applied to the Energy Equity Project Community of Practice cohort: a national collaborative effort to create a standardized framework for energy equity measurement, reporting, and tracking that drives clean energy investment and impact for BIPOC and frontline communities, was accepted for summer cohort (FY24).

Program and Policy Implementation and Updates: Collaborated with other RPCs, regional and state partners on development and implementation of programs towards achieving energy and GHG emissions targets- including but not limited to:

- Provided comments and participated in stakeholder advisory efforts including:
 - Clean Electricity Programs and RES Updates (PSD), ANR Rulemaking, Municipal Vulnerability Index and VT Climate Toolkit (ANR, Climate Office), Clean Heat Standard reform, Green Workforce Development (EAN), and Residential Energy Building Energy Standards;
 - Reviewed and provided feedback on Efficiency VT regional data and reports. Reviewed updated Energy Burden Report draft; provided feedback per request (NVDA).
 - Reviewed State DOE GRIP funding applications and provided letter of support for regional utilities.
 - Supported over 21 Central Vermont applications to the VT Community EV Charging Incentive Program (ACCD).

CLEAN WATER

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to assist with completion of the EPA required watershed plans. RPCs also work with municipalities to design and implement stormwater mitigation projects and implement river corridor assessments in local planning and regulations which result in better and safer growth management decisions.

- **604b:** Reviewed 39 Stormwater Master Plans and Stormwater Infrastructure Map Reports. Identified 57 projects not included in the Watershed Projects Database and 28 projects with discrepancies between the report information and the Watershed Projects Database entry.

- **Clean Water Service Provider for the Winooski River Basin:** Facilitated monthly Basin Water Quality Council meetings. In coordination with the Basin Water Quality Council, adopted Rules of Procedure and a project scoring methodology (for reviewing proposed projects and prioritizing them for funding). Met with Department of Environmental Conservation project management team and other Clean Water Service Providers to discuss program implementation and offer feedback on guidance documents. Pre-qualified six organizations as Project Implementors and issued a single Request for Proposals for non-regulatory, phosphorous-reduction projects.
- **Tactical Basin Planning & Partner Engagement:** Participated in quarterly regional coordination meetings for the Winooski and Lamoille River basins, a series of meetings organized by the Vermont Natural Resources Council and The Nature Conservancy to discuss dam removal project ideas and opportunities for collaboration, and eight Chittenden County Clean Water Advisory Committee meetings to report out on progress with the Winooski Clean Water Service Provider. Facilitated two Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission Clean Water Advisory Committee meetings to connect with partner organizations, learn about municipal needs related to water quality improvements and engage with the Basin Planner to develop an updated Tactical Basin Plan for the Winooski River Basin. Recruited new members to the Clean Water Advisory Committee. Reviewed the draft 2023 Winooski River Tactical Basin Plan and provided feedback to the Basin Planner, including the identification of strategies for CVRPC collaboration.
- **Tactical Basin Plan Implementation:** Advanced Vermont's effort to reduce phosphorus loading to Lake Champlain via the Winooski River Basin by:
 - Managing stormwater projects in Moretown (implementation) and Barre City (Final Design).
 - Conducting a site visit in Northfield with Department of Environmental Conservation staff, the Northfield Planning Commission and a representative of Norwich University to discuss potential restoration opportunities along Slate Brook.
 - Writing a successful grant application to fund stormwater improvements in Calais and Woodbury.
 - Meeting with the Roxbury Planning Commission, Northfield Planning Commission and the Plainfield Conservation Commission to discuss surface water reclassification, stream corridors, water quality initiatives, project development and funding, and Tactical Basin Planning objectives.
 - Reviewing Town Plans and Zoning Bylaws for conformance with model River Corridor language for regulating development in flood hazard areas and identifying municipalities for targeted outreach in the next fiscal year.
 - Assisting the Town of Plainfield with zoning bylaw updates to flood hazard and river corridor regulations.
 - Responding to requests for information to assist with the development of a stormwater master plan for Williamstown.

- Providing Clean Water Initiative Program signs to partners and recording their use on the Clean Water Project Signs Online Tracking Spreadsheet.
- **Municipal Roads Grants in Aid:** Conducted pre-construction site visits for projects in one municipalities and coached municipalities on program requirements.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Municipal Solar Workshops: CVRPC hosted two out of a three-part workshop series intended to support member municipalities interested in municipal solar projects. The workshops were for town leaders interested in solar but unsure of how to start. Part I covered an overview of different models of municipal solar and provided the broad strokes of how to develop and implement projects. In addition to staff resources, experts from Norwich Solar joined the workshop. Part II focused on how to get started with siting municipal projects, and practicing on available tools (including the new Act 174 Planning Atlas Map Viewer) that can be used for project development as well as to facilitate community conversations. The topics touched on basic considerations rezoning, storage, and dual land use to frame project development best practices. The trainings have resulted in technical assistance for developing specific projects in Marshfield Village & Town, Worcester, Middlesex, Berlin (matching fund opportunities for Northeast Borders application), and more.

In FY24 the series will continue with Part III. This final installment was submitted as a proposal and has been accepted for the Renewable Energy Vermont annual conference. It is titled *EmPOWERing Municipal Solar: Building Connections between Communities and Industry Experts* (Fall 2023).

ADMINISTRATION AND FUNDING

The FY23 CVRPC budget was ~ \$2 million. Revenue sources included state and federal performance contracts, grants, and local assessments.

Most of the CVRPC's revenue sources are tied to contracts with scopes of work, guidelines, and/or performance measures. This means CVRPC has limited flexibility in how it can use the vast majority of its funding. Funding received through municipal assessments is the exception, which makes this funding stream particularly important. It gives us the greatest latitude to respond to the region's needs. The grants we receive enable us to work with our towns on areas such as transportation, emergency planning, community development, energy, and natural resources. Revenue from federal and state grantors requires non-federal matching funds ranging from 10 percent (Transportation Planning Initiative) to 50 percent (Emergency Management Planning Grant). Municipal assessments and regional planning funds passed through to CVRPC under a performance grant with the Department of Housing and Community Development are used to provide this match.

CVRPC maintained its line of credit in FY23 due to a prevalence of product-based contracts. It maintains a Board-designated reserve fund, and a four-year plan for equipment and software upgrades and replacement.

CVRPC's annual audit will be completed in fall 2023. CVRPC has had no audit findings in recent years. It is considered a 'low risk' grantee by federal agencies. Staffing throughout FY23 included up to nine employees: Executive Director, Senior Planners (3), Planners (3), Assistant Planner (1), and an Office Manager. CVRPC supported workforce development through use of three Planning Technicians for transportation and planning services. CVRPC contracts for accounting services.

In FY23, CVRPC adopted a new Clean Water Service Provider Public Participation Policy as well as updated its Personnel, Grants Management and Procurement Policies; revised its Bylaws; and updated Rules of Procedure for one Committee.

ADDENDUM – JULY 2023 FLOOD EVENT RESPONSE

During the July 10-11 flooding event in Central Vermont, the RPC relied on relationships built over years of collaboration with municipalities and the disaster response systems they have helped create and been trained on. While the work RPSs undertake to mitigate the impacts of a disaster chiefly takes place between events, the following addendum to our annual report provides a recounting of how an RPC can step in to fill gaps in times of need. During and following the flooding, staff provided technical assistance, support, and auxiliary capacity on myriad questions, concerns, and needs when municipal resources were stretched thin responding to the disaster on the ground and taking care of their residents. The RPC was there to assist local leaders and staff when they needed to understand their options and how to engage with state and federal partners and resources. As recovery continues, the RPC is transitioning back to a planning role, ensuring that we learn from this event and provide our municipalities with the resources and assistance they need to mitigate the impacts of future disasters, become more resilient, and ultimately thrive.

Under the RPC memorandum of understanding with the Department of Public Safety for disaster response CVRPC staff participated in the following activities.

Local Liaison: Staff were activated on three occasions to contact the 23 municipalities within the CV planning region and enter information into the WebEOC portal. Information related isolated residents, emergency situations, risks to life, observed damage to public and private facilities, economic impacts, and status of cultural land marks was reported back to Vermont Emergency Management (VEM). Helped municipalities submit tickets for emergency assistance to VEM.

State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC): Two CVRPC staff provided support to the SEOC. Support was provided for documentation and in situational awareness. CVRPC Staff were staffed the SEOC for a total of 7 days, each shift was between 12 and 13 hours.

Under the annual RPC **Emergency Management Performance Grant**, staff provided the following technical assistance to support municipalities as they responded to the flooding and eventually began the transition to the recovery process:

- Monitored the storm before the event and communicated with municipal EMDs to be prepared,
- Disseminated FEMA disaster response process to town staff (select boards, zoning officers, EMDs and town planners),
- Provided municipalities answers on FEMA Public Assistance on document retention, how to document damages and which procurement guidelines to follow,
- Helped municipalities get access to the FEMA Grants Portal due to staff changeover and loss of access,
- Staffed the local Multi-Agency Resource Center (one day),
- Provided outreach for resources such as PPE, water test kits, information on Individual assistance, NRCS Emergency Watershed Program,
- Notified towns about national guard visits and DSA teams







- Assisted municipalities to maximize their state ERAF scores by helping to complete LEMPs and making sure LHMPs being worked on were submitted before cutoff deadlines.
- Provided guidance on filings for disaster reimbursement, including fire departments and other town services activated for disaster response.
- Supported Barre City and Montpelier identify structures in Special Flood Hazard Area and list historic structures for substantial damage assessment tasks.
- Collected damages on town roads and submitted road condition reports to VTans District 6
- Supported towns in emailing guidance and follow-up on debris removal questions,
- Queried sources for available assistance for severely damaged municipal fire station in the Town of Woodbury,
- Organized meeting on floodplain buyout and elevation programs for Barre City and Montpelier,
- Tracked down information for towns on driveway repair eligibility under FEMA Individual assistance
- Attended Plainfield Flood Forum at town request,
- Attended meeting on status of dams within region and which historical dams were lost or damaged during event.






AT WORK MAP

The map depicting the range of services provided by the CVRPC to member municipalities is included on the next page.


CVRPC at Work: FY 2023

Projects

-  Brownfields
-  Clean Water
-  Economic Development
-  Energy Planning & Implementation
-  Emergency Planning & Response
-  Equity & Environmental Justice and Healthy Communities



-  Grant Writing
-  Housing
-  Mapping
-  Planning and Zoning
-  Transportation Planning (including Bridge/Culvert Inventory, REI & Traffic Counts)

Designation

-  Designated Downtown

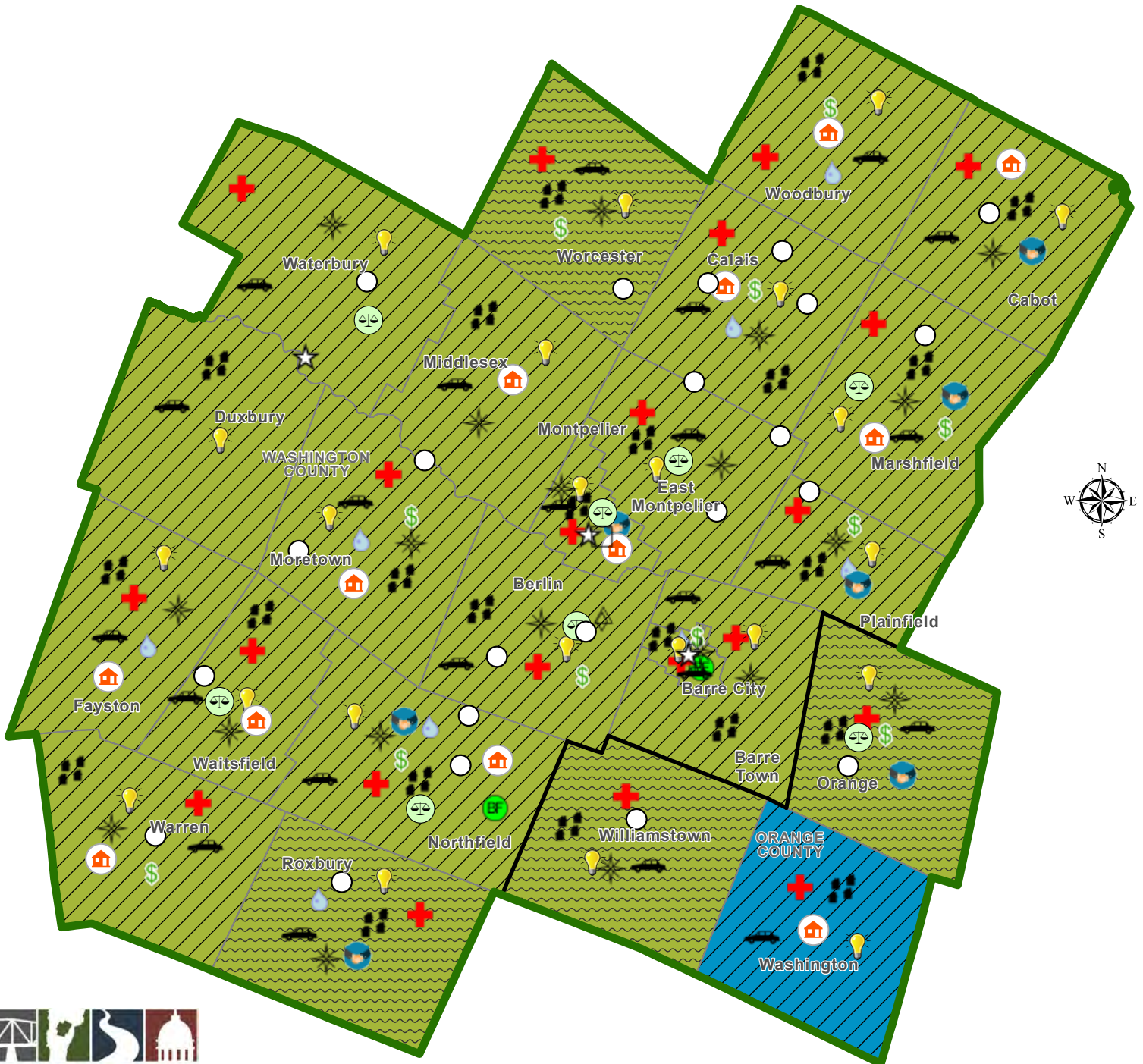
-  Designated Village
-  Designated Growth Center
-  Neighborhood Development Area
-  New Town Center
-  County Boundary

Municipal Bylaw Status

-  Adopted
-  Flood Only

Municipal Plan Status

-  Current
-  Expired



Lamoille County Planning Commission

FY 2023 Annual Report

Founded in 1966 as the Lamoille County Planning and Development Corporation, the Lamoille County Planning Commission (LCPC) continues to be an important resource to the 15 municipalities of Lamoille County—ten towns and five incorporated villages.

For some years, Lamoille County has been the second fastest growing county in Vermont. The County saw additional growth-especially in the Stowe area- during COVID. Although housing units have been developed in some areas, including Morrisville, there is still a significant housing shortage in the County.

The county's economy is primarily tourism-based—including two major ski resorts—with a growing number of home-grown, nationally-renowned businesses, such as Concept 2, MSI, Butternut Mountain Farm, and The Alchemist. The LCPC's mission is to ensure the protection of the region's environment and conservation of natural resources, and to facilitate sustainable economic development for the benefit of all residents and visitors through a coordinated and cooperative planning process at the local level. Recent flooding reinforces the need for resilient economic development.

Each municipality's legislative body (Selectboard or Trustees) determines who will represent them on the LCPC Board of Directors. Member municipalities of 2,500 residents or greater appoint two directors and municipalities under 2,500 appoint one director to represent that municipality's interests in regional affairs. Additionally, the LCPC has five at-large, elected directors to represent regional interests. Directors serve on committees that make recommendations to the full 24-member Board of Directors. The LCPC has nine highly qualified full-time and part-time staff providing support to the Board and its committees and executing the Commission's multifaceted work program.

The Lamoille County Planning Commission continually updates internal financial processes and procedures to ensure compliance with all federal, state and grant requirements. The LCPC recently updated both the Personnel and Procurement Policies to be in conformance with all State and Federal statutory changes. The LCPC is audited on an annual basis. The organization continues to receive clean audits, and reviews all policies and practices on an ongoing basis.

The LCPC receives most of its funding through grants, and through performance-based contracts with the state. Town assessments constitute a small, but very important, percentage of our funding.

Revenue from virtually all federal and state grantors requires matching funds, and typically non-federal matching funds. Required match ranges from 10 percent (Transportation Planning Initiative) to 50 percent (Emergency Management Planning Grant & Northern Vermont Economic Development District).

For the 2023 fiscal year, the LCPC's total projected revenue of over \$2,000,000 was derived from a mix of regional project grant funding, municipal project grant funding, state performance contract funding, non-profit organization grants, federal economic development funding, and a small amount from town assessments. LCPC will have its first Single Audit for Fiscal Year 2023 due to the large amount of Federal funding received during the year.

Virtually all the LCPC's revenue sources are tied to contracts with scopes of work, guidelines, and/or performance measures. The commission's performance contract with the state is also necessary to provide matching funds required by grantors. The grants we receive enable us to work with municipalities on areas such as transportation, emergency planning, community development, brownfields redevelopment, water quality, energy, and natural resources.

PLANNING & ZONING

Municipal

Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) act as a cost-effective professional planning staff for many of Vermont's municipalities. Work in recent years has focused on improving municipal plans and local permitting through education and consultations, bylaw modernization, facilitating housing, and implementing statutory requirements for flood resiliency planning. Current and clear plans and bylaws are essential for smooth state and local permitting. This work is supported through local and regional planning funds, local contributions, and other grants. All technical assistance provided this year is shown on the At Work map on the final page of the report. Highlights include:

- The LCPC, with input from the Town of Hyde Park and the local Gihon Valley Hall Committee, developed conceptual plans to improve safety for pedestrians and connectivity in North Hyde Park Village. The LCPC staff assisted the Town of Hyde Park in refining an application to participate in the new VTrans Demonstration Project Program. The demonstration, which occurred in July 2022, allowed the community to test safety improvements including proposed crosswalks, and improved signage. The data seems to show an increase in pedestrian traffic related to community events, and the speed of vehicles on VT100 appeared to slow down a little while the demonstration was in place.
- A Municipal Planning Grant awarded to the Town of Hyde Park built on goals for a walkable and bikeable North Hyde Park and earlier work undertaken by the town to encourage new housing in its village centers. With the Hyde Park Planning Commission, the LCPC is developing proposals to modernize the North Hyde Park Village bylaws.
- Using a separate funding source, the LCPC is also assisting the Village of Hyde Park in illustrating the intent of bylaws and making them more user friendly. In North Hyde Park envisioning the outcomes of regulatory change is setting the stage to deliver what residents want and need, reflect community values, and strengthen a local sense of place. In North Hyde Park, bylaw modernization will also help guide future investments in essential infrastructure in community wastewater. Wastewater capacity is necessary to adapt existing properties for new and expanded uses, and to add new future development in locations where this is desired.

- The Commission was active in water quality issues including implementing water quality projects and programs to protect water resources, ensuring safe water supplies, enhancing recreational opportunities, and addressing known sources of pollution.
- The LCPC assisted the Town of Elmore with identifying funding/financing sources to relocate their Town Highway Garage, which has reached the end of its useful life. The zoning district for the new garage property required a site larger than strictly necessary for a town garage. The additional acreage provides an opportunity for the Town to explore community recreational uses appropriate for the site. The LCPC provided ideas for potential recreational future programming for the Planning Commission's consideration. The visioning anticipated future opportunities for pedestrian and cycling access to the site. The Town is considering surveying levels of resident interest in program elements.
- In FY 2023, the LCPC assisted the Towns of Cambridge and Johnson with Town Plan updates.
- Since 2019, the LCPC has been assisting the Town of Wolcott with coordinating a study of options to address wastewater limitations in the Village Center. In June of 2023, a "Preliminary Engineering Report" identified an option for a shared leach field located at the Wolcott Elementary School. The location is particularly important for Wolcott, given that it is located outside of the floodplain. During the July 2023 flood, many homes in Wolcott experienced damage to their leach fields and sewage backup due to onsite septic systems located in the floodplain. In addition to providing opportunities to revitalize less flood prone areas of the Village, the wastewater project will also reduce this risk during future floods.

Regional

Regional Planning Commissions coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan and related studies. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors. The current Lamoille County Regional Plan was adopted in 2015. The Regional Plan Committee and the LCPC staff are currently working on updating the Lamoille County Regional Plan. A new plan is slated for adoption in the fall of 2023. The process of updating the plan includes consultation with the Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) committee as well as with the full LCPC board.

The LCPC has updated its Act 250 review process, making the process more transparent, understandable, and accessible to both developers and municipalities. The Commission has engaged in extensive outreach to increase regional understanding of the Commission's role in the Act 250 process. In FY23, the LCPC reviewed two major Act 250 applications and two Section 248 applications.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with solid planning functions. RPCs work with towns and in strong partnership with Regional Development Corporations (RDCs), to develop comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont for long term economic growth.

The LCPC secured a consortium Municipal Planning Grant in FY22 to identify infrastructure needs for increasing childcare opportunities. The towns of Cambridge, Johnson, Stowe, and Wolcott joined together in this effort to identify the infrastructure barriers to creating more childcare opportunities. The LCPC assisted in hiring a consultant to study the water/wastewater infrastructure in the four study areas. A final report is being created and will be presented to planning commissions in September.

The LCPC also assisted the Elmore Community Trust (ECT) with elements of the Elmore General Store revitalization project. ECT was awarded Village Center Tax Credits through the Agency of Commerce and Community Development and a Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grant through the Preservation Trust of Vermont (PTV). The LCPC helped coordinate with ECT and PTV to amend the scope of work covered by the Bruhn Grant and put together the National Environmental Policy Act checklist required for the upgrade of the store's septic system.

In FY23, the LCPC continues to work with the newly formed Lamoille FiberNet Communications Union District (LFCUD). The district now represents all ten towns in Lamoille County. A Communications Union District (CUD) is a unique kind of Vermont municipality comprised of two or more towns and established for the purpose of building communication infrastructure together.

The LCPC assisted the LFCUD in managing a USDA Rural Business Development Grant to fund broadband planning efforts led by the Lamoille CUD. The LCPC served as the grant manager and provided mapping services for broadband planning efforts. The LFCUD hired an Executive Director and Grants Manager to assist in providing broadband planning services. This grant and initial planning effort closed out in September of 2022.

The lack of water and wastewater infrastructure remains a major impediment to revitalization and community development in many Village Centers throughout Lamoille County's rural communities. The LCPC continues to work with member municipalities to address these challenges.

- The LCPC is currently working with the Town of Wolcott to investigate wastewater solutions for the Designated Wolcott Village Center with funding through the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation and the Northern Border Regional Commission. The Town also secured \$2.5 million for implementation of a soil based wastewater system in the Village Center.
- The LCPC worked with the Town of Hyde Park to begin a "planning advance" for similar investigations in the North Hyde Park Village Center.
- The LCPC also helped the Village of Jeffersonville secure almost a million dollars in funding from the Northern Border Regional Commission and Congressionally Directed Funding for critical upgrades to their municipal water system. The Village completed construction of the first phase of these improvements in the fall of 2022, and is beginning engineering of further improvements in 2023.

The LCPC continues to work closely with the Lamoille Economic Development Corporation to foster development in the region. The Executive Director of each organization serves *ex officio* on the other's board. This level of coordination allows for improved communication, development, and community outreach.

The Commission, along with members of the Smugglers' Notch Partnership, completed another successful summer of operations at the Barnes Camp Visitors' Center. The LCPC, the Green Mountain Club, and the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation continue to coordinate outdoor volunteer operations at the Barnes Camp Visitors' Center. In order to ensure the safety of visitors, the LCPC and the Green Mountain Club worked with the Town of Stowe to apply for and receive a grant from the Vermont Agency of Transportation's Bicycle and Pedestrian Program to install a formal crosswalk on Route 108 at Barnes Camp. The crosswalk and associated "Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon" (donated by Green Mountain Club) were installed in fall of 2022 and are actively used by visitors to the property.

Tractor trailer trucks trying to traverse the turns of Smugglers' Notch remain a perennial challenge. Sign improvements identified in a "Road Safety Audit" have had some success in reducing the total number of truck "stuckages". Some drivers, however, continue to attempt to cross through the Notch. Beginning in Summer 2022, LCPC and VTrans facilitated a scoping study to further explore and evaluate alternatives to further discourage and prevent trucks from entering the Notch. This process included significant public engagement in addition to engineering investigations. The study may result in a test/demonstration project of temporary "chicanes" at the northern and southern gateways of the Notch.

Also in the Notch, the LCPC finalized plans for ecological restoration and parking improvements along Route 108 through the Notch. The project includes restoring "bootleg" parking areas along the road shoulder and streambanks with native vegetation appropriate to the Notch's alpine environment, and relocating parking to safer, less environmentally sensitive areas with modern stormwater management. The project will result in a net reduction of impervious surface in the Notch, with an associated reduction in sediment and phosphorus entering the sensitive headwaters of local rivers, while maintaining similar amounts of parking available for visitors. Due to increased construction costs, the project was divided into two phases. Construction of the first phase began in May 2023, with project completion anticipated in early September 2023. LCPC is actively working with VTrans and the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation.

The Lamoille County Planning Commission continues to support the work of the Working Communities Challenge (WCC) grant through the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. This grant was secured with the LCPC's assistance and has evolved to focus on improving employment access while tackling issues like housing and transportation. There are several core community partners throughout the region. This partnership also led to a VTrans grant-funded study in Fiscal Year 2022 to further examine transportation issues, and in turn set the stage for a Fiscal Year 2023 grant application to identify solutions and costs for mitigating congestion on VT108 in Stowe.

GRANT WRITING

The LCPC provided help identifying appropriate funding sources, defining project scope, and writing applications for numerous municipalities. Some highlights are included below:

- The LCPC staff assisted Johnson Village with requesting Congressional Discretionary Spending funds to design and construct a new garage facility. The existing building suffers from multiple issues which present challenges to both the staff and the operational efficiency of operating and maintaining public utilities (water, sewer, electric, stormwater, sidewalks). Also coordinated and facilitated a Brownfields Committee discussion about this pending project.
- In FY23, the LCPC assisted the Town of Johnson in applying for a Northern Borders Regional Commission (NBRC) grant. A 2023 NBRC Catalyst Program grant will help the Town fund the development of a light industrial/commercial park outside of the 100-year floodplain along the Lamoille River. This project will develop critical infrastructure including an access road, water, wastewater, electric, and telecommunications. Installing this core infrastructure in a safer area will be critical for Johnson's ability to create local, accessible job opportunities and be resilient in the face of future climate conditions and extreme weather events.
- Since November 2021, the LCPC has been collaborating with the Wolcott Schoolhouse Revitalization Committee on the goal of bringing new life to the Historic Wolcott Schoolhouse. With assistance from the LCPC, the committee was awarded the Preservation Trust of Vermont's Robert Sincerbeaux Fund Grant (RSF) in April 2022. The RSF grant allowed the committee to obtain an updated architectural report. The report proposed revitalizing the building by creating a multi-use community-focused area by installing a small café and adding space for the historical society. The LCPC and the committee continued to explore additional funding opportunities with Preservation Trust of Vermont, USDA, and other funders. In the fall of 2022, the LCPC helped coordinate a Wolcott town-funded Architectural constraints analysis that identified the cost of making the building safe for use. The LCPC staff also helped the Town secure a Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) and issue a Request for Proposals for a Site Feasibility Study funded by the MPG. All of this is an effort to continue moving the Schoolhouse building towards being a focal point and useful facility for the residents of Wolcott and visitors to the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail.

BROWNFIELDS

This year saw renewed interest and support for the Brownfields Committee. The Brownfields Committee meets bimonthly to review requests for funding to support the assessment of environmental contamination at sites within Lamoille County. With a \$50,000 grant from the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the LCPC was able to continue the important work of property assessment, with the goal of redevelopment. In addition to the state funds, the LCPC secured a \$370,200 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to conduct environmental assessments, outreach, and facilitate an area-wide redevelopment plan.

The LCPC staff facilitates the bi-monthly Brownfields Committee meetings and helps bring site nominations forward for their consideration. Several new sites were nominated and accepted under the LCPC Brownfields program in the past year. Two sites in Wolcott include the Wolcott Town Forest and Gravel Parking Lot. The Town Forest is undergoing a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) to investigate any contamination. Most of the property will be sold and held in a conservation easement, with a small portion of the property intended for redevelopment into an affordable housing site. The Gravel Parking Lot is also undergoing a Phase II ESA to determine the presence of any contamination, in anticipation of sale and redevelopment. One new site was also selected for a Phase I ESA in Morrisville, Denoia's Dry Cleaners. Other ongoing site investigations under the program involve the Johnson Powerhouse, and Fred's Auto Garage in Hyde Park. To support these projects, the LCPC staff helps coordinate ongoing communication with consultants, property owners, and other regional partners.

In Johnson Village, the LCPC provided visioning for a 'pop up' roadside park by the covered bridge, an area adjacent to the former hydro dam, a Brownfield property. Activating this site could help to slow traffic at this Village Gateway zone to benefit children walking and biking to school and residents walking to businesses and services on Main Street, and inspire the community to prioritize permanent reuse of the site for local recreation.

In Jeffersonville, the LCPC assisted the new owner of the Granary building with site planning ideas to enhance this Brownfield property's appearance, its repurposing as a local food businesses hub, and restoring a segment of a former railroad as a bike/ped connection to the adjacent village. A strong vision of the site's reuse and the positive impact this creates in the broader community set a solid foundation for the project's permitting under BRELLA.

HOUSING

Lamoille County's population continues to grow. Towns in Lamoille County are within commuting distance to regional jobs in Montpelier and Chittenden County. How growth occurs impacts housing affordability. New housing for Lamoille's workforce can be constructed on sites that can support new development, but barriers exist to building housing types that match demographics and financial situations and can fit successfully in neighborhoods.

In Fiscal Year 2023, the LCPC began a collaborative effort with the Lamoille Housing Partnership, the Stowe Land Trust, and the Lamoille Economic Development Corporation to update a Housing Needs Assessment for the County.

The Town of Hyde Park received a "Bylaw Modernization Grant" from the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development. The Lamoille Area Board of Realtors also contributed to this project with a sizeable grant. The LCPC worked with the Town to explore zoning tools to encourage "missing middle" housing options while maintaining the community's unique sense of place. "Missing middle" housing refers to housing that is affordable to working families who earn too much for most subsidized, affordable housing, but are still priced out of most of an area's market rate housing. Missing middle housing often consists of house-scale buildings with 2-4 units that are compatible in scale and form to existing single family homes. As the Town noted in

its application, *“Lamoille County is at the highest cost-burdened level at 20% per State housing data. Residents and business owners are faced with the challenge of finding housing at all for workers and young adults.”* In recognition of this need, Lamoille Area Board of Realtors provided supplemental funds for this effort.

The Regional Plan Committee and the LCPC staff updated the Lamoille County Housing chapter as part of the Regional Plan update. This is an area where future Plan Amendments are expected to reflect Act 47, the state’s new housing legislation, and current efforts to update the Vermont Housing Needs Assessment.

LCPC provided project management and grant administration services to the Town of Johnson and Jenna’s Promise related to a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). Through the CDBG, Jenna’s Promise restored a vacant building on Johnson’s Main Street, creating eight units of recovery housing and a community café that creates job training and employment opportunities for people in recovery.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Through a contract with Vermont Agency of Transportation, each RPC coordinates the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort has provided a statewide framework for public involvement in planning the improvements to Vermont’s transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). The TAC includes representatives from local communities with transportation stakeholders having the opportunity to provide input. Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the state’s transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state, and federal transportation network advancement.

In this reporting period, the Lamoille County Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) met six times, with an average member participation rate of 26.7%. Some of this year’s TAC activities include: Vermont Transportation Equity Framework, Municipal Roads General Permit, Web Portal Data Management Training, LVRT Presentation, Public Transport Study Presentation, Transportation Planning Updates & Roundtable Discussion.

The Lamoille County Road Foremen Network met once during the year. Meetings will be planned for the upcoming year. In addition to the meetings, at various times the LCPC staff met with road foremen, superintendents, and commissioners individually to offer technical assistance, discuss municipal issues of concern, and act as liaison to VTrans and other state agencies' staff as needed and upon request for specific topics.

Outreach and Municipal assistance requests increased this year compared to the prior year as needs continued to arise. The LCPC staff served on several Committees and Boards including the Regional Elders & Persons with Disabilities (E&D) committee, Rural Community Transportation’s Board of Directors as President, and the Green Mountain Transit’s Board of Commissioners.

Municipalities sought assistance stemming from public complaints about roads. Additionally, as established during the early months of COVID, the LCPC continued to partner with our regional human services agencies to support and assist with an increased need for services and assistance.

Outreach and Municipal Assistance provided by the LCPC staff include, but are not limited to: one local concerns questionnaire, one accelerated bridge project meeting, quarterly E&D meetings, human services transportation partners regular meetings, quarterly water quality and fish habitat partners meetings, and seasonal site visits with towns, multiple meetings with one town about bike/ped demonstration projects, TAC meetings, and discussions with two towns regarding class 4 roads and the reclassification process, regularly recurring Smugglers' Notch & Barnes Camp meetings, and Green Mountain Byway Committee meetings.

The LCPC provides ongoing assistance to Belvidere for transportation project planning and management including project management services for Better Roads and Grant in Aid projects.

Data collection activities by the LCPC for the Vermont Agency of Transportation included 12 tube traffic counts, 1 turning movement count, 1 manual and 1 automatic bike/ped counts, 4 park and ride counts, and annual town complete street reporting.

The LCPC continued to participate in the Vermont Better Roads Program, which works to promote use of Best Management Practices for erosion control and maintenance techniques along municipal roads that preserve infrastructure while protecting Vermont's lakes and streams.

All 10 towns in the County are participating in Grant in Aid this year and multiple towns request aid annually on transportation related grants.

The LCPC continues to assist towns in recovering from the Halloween Storm of 2019. For example, Belvidere closed their last project in February 2023.

The LCPC facilitated the Green Mountain Byway Committee in partnership with Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC). The expanded Byway is now a 71-mile loop from Waterbury to Stowe, Morristown, Hyde Park, Johnson, and Cambridge, including the Smugglers' Notch Scenic Highway which takes you back to Stowe.

The TPI workplan provides several task categories which support municipal planning and technical assistance, and over 50% of the LCPC's total TPI budget supports municipal technical assistance. Example projects that fall under municipal technical assistance are:

- Water Quality: provided coordination with the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) and facilitated group and individual discussions with municipal staff, boards, and other partners in all 10 towns.
- Compliance with the Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP): continued providing technical services and guidance for towns to comply with the MRGP via Better Roads and

Grant In Aid funding; combined other funds with TPI budget to optimize resources and outcomes.

- Planning Studies: conducted a “Gap & Needs Analysis” regarding public transit services in Lamoille County, funded by the VTrans Mobility and Transportation Innovations program; prepared for implementation of parking and stormwater improvements for the Smugglers’ Notch State Park area in partnership with Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation, and Vermont Agency of Transportation; participated in VT108/VT100 Corridor and Congestion Planning; participated in VEM funded planning for two road structures in Hyde Park; assisted three municipalities with grant applications for transportation planning studies (Johnson Scribner Bridge, Cambridge Greenway Extension, Johnson Sidewalks); . The LCPC staff also served on the VTrans ‘Transportation Alternatives’ grant selection committee.

EMERGENCY PLANNING & RESPONSE

Regional Planning Commissions play key roles in the mitigation and preparedness phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont Emergency Management, the Vermont Homeland Security Unit, Vermont Agency of Transportation, and the Agency of Natural Resources. RPCs provide direct staff to the State Emergency Operations Center, administrative support to the Regional Emergency Management Committees, and coordination among responders and planners throughout the State’s four Public Safety Districts. RPCs also help update floodplain bylaws and FEMA-required hazard mitigation plans, coordinate updates to municipal emergency plans, and assist as needed in special circumstances like Tropical Storm Irene and other declared disasters.

Notable projects in FY23 included:

- The LCPC was awarded Disaster Recovery Technical Assistance funds from USDA Rural Development to provide direct technical assistance to further develop projects that show high potential to protect important community facilities in Lamoille County that are vulnerable to flooding. As of July 1, 2022, the technical assistance program has been used to evaluate options to address flooding and erosion on North Wolcott Road in Wolcott, the intersection of Route 109 and Back Road in Belvidere, and the Basin Road Bridge in Belvidere, to evaluate floodplain restoration opportunities at several locations in Wolcott and at the “Holmes Meadow” in Johnson, and to evaluate stormwater improvements on Railroad Street in Johnson and at the former “Granary” in Jeffersonville. This funding was also used to provide additional project coordination support for floodplain restoration/ stormwater final design planning at Dorothy Smith Access area in Jeffersonville, and floodplain restoration planning for a Berm Removal project at the Upper Lamoille River Access Area in Wolcott.
- Staff worked with Eden to update their Local Hazard Mitigation Plans.
- Managed a Flood Resilient Communities Fund (FRCF) grant for acquisition and floodplain restoration at the “Holmes Meadow” in the Village of Johnson. Flood modeling completed

in 2019 identified the potential for floodplain restoration in this location to reduce damage from flooding and ice jams in Johnson Village.

- Ten of ten (100%) municipalities in the region currently have an updated local emergency management plan (LEMP).
- The LCPC continued to provide administrative and technical assistance to the Lamoille REMC (Regional Emergency Management Committee) to host trainings and emergency preparedness discussions. In FY23, the REMC drafted bylaws, created a list of trainings they would like to hold, and worked with Vermont Emergency Management to finalize a regional coordination plan.
- Staff coordinated with Vermont Forest and Parks and FEMA to implement the plan derived from the Smugglers' Notch Drainage Study to identify alternatives to mitigate flood and erosion damage to Route 108.
- Staff worked with the Town of Hyde Park to hire a consultant to study possible alternatives at the Garfield Rd Culvert and Whitcomb Island Bridge. The consultant proposed their alternatives to the selectboard to choose between. The LCPC will continue working with Hyde Park to pursue additional funding for final design and construction of both sites.
- Managed a grant where the funds were subcontracted to all RPCs in Vermont to assist municipalities with updating their flood hazard bylaws in preparation for the update of FEMA Floodplain Maps. The LCPC prioritized all of their municipalities in order to assist the towns and villages that need the most help.
- Starting in 2015, the LCPC has worked with communities along the Lamoille River Main Stem to develop a hydraulic model of the Lamoille River Main Stem. The model is designed to show floodwater levels during various-sized storm events. The model can also show the impacts of structures, such as roads and bridges, on upstream and downstream flood levels. The model was used to identify major flood mitigation projects in Cambridge and Jeffersonville, which prevented significant damages in the 2019 flood. In the past year, the model was used to identify opportunities to allow for redevelopment while maintaining or lowering flood levels in Johnson Village. The LCPC is now working with municipal leaders and property owners to move forward with several promising options. The model is also being used to design two major floodplain restoration projects in the Town of Wolcott, which will reduce flooding on important town roads while also providing important habitat for wildlife and removing significant amounts of sediment and phosphorous from the water shed. The model is a public document available to any community. Every time the model is used for a community project, additional data is added, making it more accurate and valuable for the Region.

JULY 2023 FLOODING

The July 2023 flood had devastating impacts on communities along the Lamoille Main Stem. Neighborhoods in Wolcott, Johnson, Jeffersonville, and Cambridge Village for many hours. The flood had disproportionate impact on neighborhoods with high percentages of rental housing, older housing stock, mobile homes, and mobile home park communities. Critical facilities such as the Wolcott Town Garage and Fire Station and Johnson Wastewater Treatment Plant were

impacted by the flood. The flood forced the closure – at least for the time being, of the Sterling Market in Johnson and Kinney's in Cambridge Village – leaving a major gap for food and medicine access, with the nearest alternatives in Morrisville or Jericho.

The Lamoille Valley Rail Trail , which was scheduled for a grand opening the weekend after the flood, suffered severe damage, including several bridge washouts, and remains closed in most of Lamoille County.

As the flood waters receded and communities shifted from response to cleanup, it became clear that recovery will take years, and that rethinking planning and priorities will be needed.

- The LCPC Staff provided ongoing support to road crews to see if they needed help getting technical assistance from VTrans or VEM.
- The LCPC provided guidance to Towns to document their damages via VEM Local Liaison role.
- The LCPC participated in discussions between communities and Rural Community Transportation (RCT) to distribute flyers and work with human service partners in publicizing new emergency bus service between Johnson and Morrisville because Johnson's grocery store was destroyed in the flood.
- Attended 2 VEM Applicant Briefings, including discussing Lamoille County needs with state and federal officials in person, including but not limited to the Wastewater Plant in Johnson and housing needs in Cambridge, Johnson, and Wolcott.
- Distributed VTrans and VEM announcements about Public Assistance sign up protocols for DR4720.
- Facilitated site visits with VTrans District 6 staff to Flat Iron Road and other damaged locations in Wolcott.
- The LCPC organized site walks in Wolcott, Johnson, Jeffersonville, and Cambridge Village with professional civil engineers and local leaders to review and gather information about flood damage in preparation for planning for repairs and future mitigation.
- LCPC also helped to coordinate a regionwide tour with representatives of State Agencies and non-profit organizations.
- Coordinated requests for Grant In Aid time extensions for 50% of Lamoille County towns with significant damage and disruptions to planned project schedules.
- Coordinated requests for municipal assistance from the LCPC staff with FEMA DR4720 filing and administration.
- Compiled a Flood Resilient Communities Fund application to conduct Gihon River Flood Modeling in Johnson Village and North Hyde Park.

ENERGY PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION

A renewed focus on clean, renewable, sustainable, and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunities and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation, and natural resource planning, and work with municipalities to assist with project

implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process.

In FY23, in accordance with Act 172, the LCPC began working with the Department of Buildings and General Services to support the development and administration of the Municipal Energy Resilience Grant Program (MERP). The LCPC staff reached out to municipalities across the region and educated them about opportunities to explore and fund energy efficiency improvements in municipally owned buildings. Moving forward, the LCPC staff will provide technical assistance to interested municipalities, and assist with submitting grant applications under the program.

In FY23, the LCPC participated in energy planning under planning/implementation support funding received from the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development to support energy committees and municipalities in promoting energy efficiency, renewable energy, energy conservation, and land use/transportation planning efforts to reduce energy demands and enhance the walkability of Village Centers/Downtowns in Lamoille County.

In FY23, The LCPC continued to assist the Town of Cambridge in developing and adopting an Enhanced Energy Plan. Staff met with local Energy Committees to provide energy planning support. The Town of Cambridge adopted an Enhanced Energy Plan in June of 2023.

The LCPC and Stowe Electric are coordinating with local energy Committees to organize a volunteer community build of low-cost window-inserts to weatherize regional homes and buildings. The LCPC also continues to provide guidance and assistance to Stowe Electric in relation to the Department's efforts to restore hydroelectric power generation at a former mill in Moscow.

The LCPC updated the Lamoille County Enhanced Energy Plan as part of the Regional Plan update.

CLEAN WATER

The Lamoille County Planning Commission works with the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) to assist with completion of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) required Tactical Basin Plans and works toward phosphorus reduction goals outlined in the Lake Champlain Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Plan. The LCPC works closely with the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) and municipalities to assess and implement water quality projects. The LCPC also works with municipalities to implement River Corridor Plans and priorities through local watershed planning, to develop regulations which result in better and safer growth management decisions.

- As part of the Clean Water Initiative, the LCPC conducted outreach on updates to water quality standards, river corridor planning, storm water management, and flood resiliency. The LCPC has engaged with ANR regarding changes to River Corridor policies and related statewide incentive programs.
- The LCPC assisted with municipal outreach regarding the 3 Acre Rule and General Stormwater Permit, and new rebate programs/funding opportunities for 3 Acre Rule sites.

- The LCPC continues to engage with other RPCs and VT DEC regarding the framework and operations of Clean Water Service Providers (CWSP). The LCPC assisted with outreach to municipalities in Lamoille County regarding the opportunity to serve as a representative on the Lamoille and Winooski Basin Water Quality Councils that will play a key role in prioritizing water quality projects for CWSP funding in these Basins. The LCPC actively participates in the Lamoille Basin Water Quality Council.
- The LCPC conducted outreach to Lamoille County municipalities regarding the update of the Winooski Tactical Basin Plan. The LCPC participated in Steering Committee Meetings and conducted initial outreach to the Lamoille Clean Water Advisory Committee (CWAC) regarding the update of the Winooski River Tactical Basin Plan. The CWAC outlined an outreach plan for fall of 2022 to gather input for the update.
- The LCPC utilized the LCPC's hydrological model to further evaluate flood mitigation options in Johnson, Cambridge, and Wolcott – including options for recovery from the July 2023 flood.
- Staff provided project development and landowner outreach for floodplain restoration projects in the towns of Cambridge, Wolcott, Johnson, and in Jeffersonville Village.
- Staff managed Clean Water Block Grant and Flood Resilient Communities Fund funding for three floodplain restoration projects—one for floodplain restoration design planning at the Dorothy Smith Access Area in Jeffersonville and two in Wolcott along the Lamoille River and Wild Branch, one for a Berm Removal Project at the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Access Area off Elmore Pond Road and one for floodplain restoration along the Wild Branch near the North Wolcott Recreation Field.

Other efforts include:

- Enhanced flood mitigation efforts along the Wild Branch in Wolcott, by utilizing funding under a 2020 USDA Technical Assistance Grant to evaluate floodplain restoration/erosion control alternatives along North Wolcott Road.
- Secured a Project Development Block Grant to continue development of water quality projects in the Lamoille and Winooski Basins.
- Worked with Stowe to review and revise flood hazard bylaws.
- Assisted the town of Johnson in exploring funding to further the design for replacing the Scribner Bridge and exploring flood mitigation alternatives such as flood chutes to mitigate flooding in downtown Johnson.
- Continued to partner with the Lamoille County Conservation District and participate in the Lamoille County Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP) Culvert Committee to identify and implement projects that improve aquatic organism passage and restore stream habitat.
- Updated the Watershed project database using funding through the 604B program administered by Rutland Regional Planning Commission.
- Secured funding to explore preliminary design planning for floodplain restoration and upsizing the Gulf Rd Bridge in Wolcott.

EQUITY & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE & HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

The Board of LCPC continues to have a Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee or JEDI for short. This sub-committee of the LCPC Board of Directors meets bi-monthly. The LCPC Board adopted a Declaration of Inclusion which will be included in all policies of the LCPC going forward. The JEDI committee developed an Equity Impact Assessment Toolkit which will be shared with municipalities as they develop their own policies. This Equity Impact Assessment Tool was utilized when evaluating policies and actions in the draft 2023 Regional Plan.

The Board is committed to ensuring that the LCPC is fully inclusive in seeking public input, that all policies and practices recognize diversity, and that the upcoming update to the Regional Plan reflects the entire community and its future.

In 2022, The Lamoille County Planning Commission began coordinating a statewide regional planning effort to increase Health Equity in the State of Vermont. The Vermont Department of Health (VDH) awarded Center for Disease Control Federal funds to coordinate the efforts of all 11 Regional Planning Commissions to focus on health equity in municipal planning. This grant goes through the end of May 2023. As the lead Regional Planning Commission, the LCPC coordinated the project with the other ten Regional Planning Commissions to design a Health Equity Toolkit, increase our knowledge of health equity through specific training, and work with the municipalities and diverse populations to create a sustainable approach to improving long term health outcomes for all Vermonters. The Toolkit was finalized and posted on LCPC's website in January of 2023.

The toolkit is being used by planners, municipal staff, and health equity partners to include health and equity language and policies in town plans, municipal bylaws, and Regional Plans. The LCPC recently incorporated health equity language into the update of the Lamoille County Regional Plan. The purpose of the toolkit is to help municipal leaders increase their understanding and capacity for including health equity language in municipal plans and to support municipalities in mobilizing local partners to enhance equitable, community-based resources for physical activity and healthy food access. While developing the toolkit, all Regional Planning Commissions participated in health equity training to help prepare for municipal implementation.

The equity focus of this grant designates the following as the target population:

- People of color
- Indigenous people
- Refugees & English language learners
- LGBTQ+ individuals
- People experiencing homelessness
- Vermonters who are Justice involved
- People living with disabilities
- People living in rural communities

Each Regional Planning Commission was granted funds to provide stipends to individuals who help contribute to the planning process and review of documents within these target populations. Together

with the support of VDH, the LCPC is working to support the creation and dissemination of health equity planning resources and helping municipalities implement pilot community-based health equity and physical activity projects with the goal of improving at least one of the following:

The natural environment	Aesthetic elements
The built environment	The social environment
Recreational settings	Across-sector partnerships
Physical barriers	Community inclusion efforts

The Vermont Department of Health also awarded the LCPC a grant to work on Hot Weather Emergency Planning. This grant focused on:

- Increasing capacity for regional and local planners to prepare for hot weather emergencies;
- Developing local plans to reduce health impacts related to hot weather emergencies;
- Encouraging identification of community cooling facilities and communication of cooling facility locations with the public.

This grant funded the development of a Hot Weather Emergency Response Plan for the Towns of Cambridge, Hyde Park, Johnson, and Stowe. This serves as an annex to the Town's Local Emergency Management Plan. Work under this grant was completed in fall of 2022.

MAPPING

In addition to enhancing the LCPC's work, our GIS specialists provide municipalities, state agencies, and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of their projects.

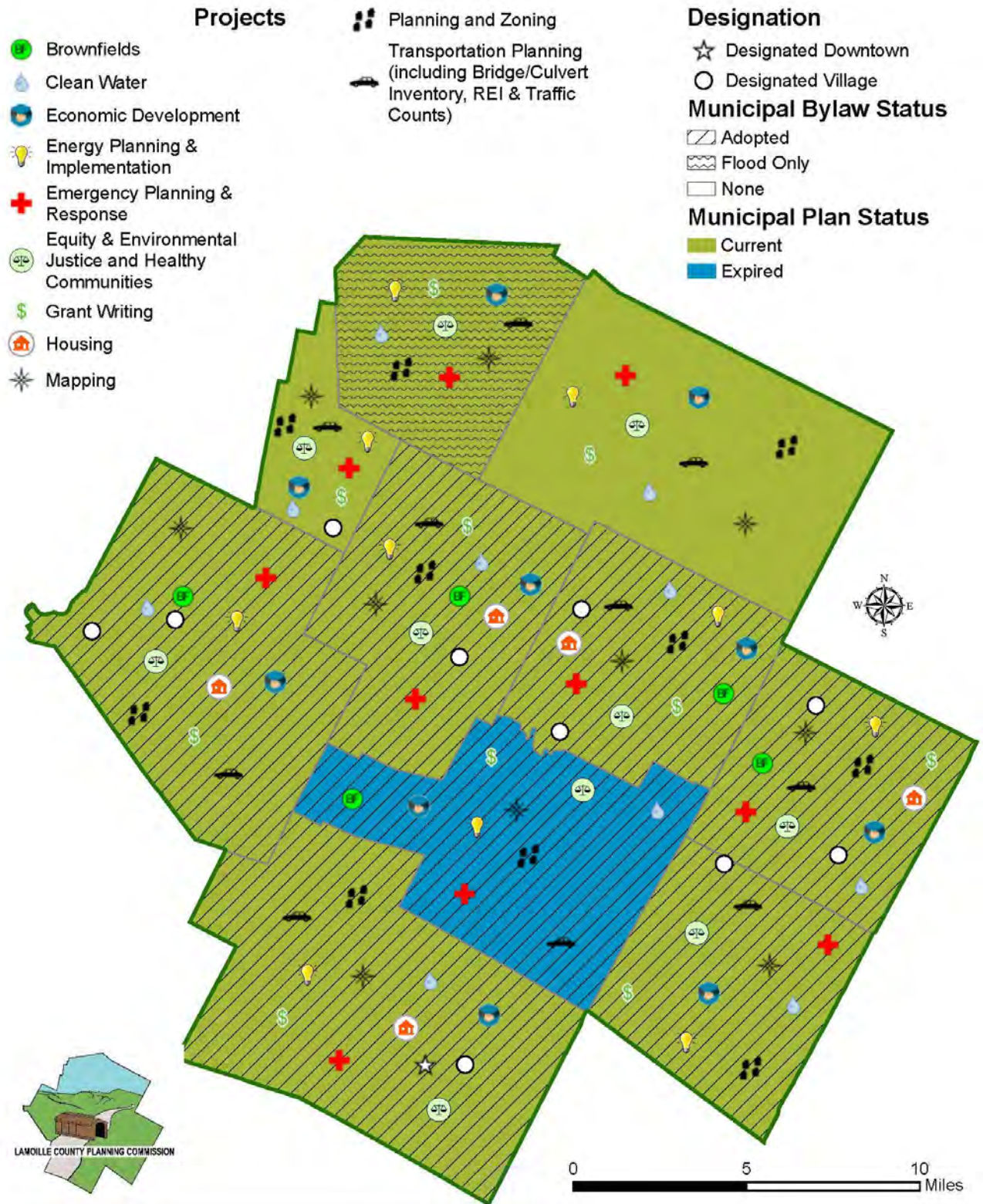
This year the LCPC:

- Worked with VTrans on the Model Inventory of Roadway Elements (MIRE) data set to update intersection points and approaches;
- Provided mapping services for residents regarding FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) data and their property locations;
- Developed maps for the following:
 - Local Hazard Mitigation Plan map updates for Eden
 - North Hyde Park Zoning and Wastewater Management
 - Broadband data showing utility poles and other broadband infrastructure for the Lamoille Fibernet CUD
 - Updated road maps for Morristown
 - The Wolcott Village Wastewater Project regarding soil type, property lines, and locations best fit for a community wastewater system
 - Waterville Village Center application
 - Wolcott Village Center Designation Renewal Application
 - The Regional Plan update for all sections
 - Cambridge Enhanced Energy Plan update
 - Viewshed analysis of Green River Reservoir
 - Johnson Town Plan update

'AT WORK' MAP

The map depicting the range of services provided by the LCPC to member municipalities is included on the next page.

LCPC at Work: FY 2023



LCPC at Work: FY 2023

Projects

- Brownfields
- Clean Water
- Economic Development
- Energy Planning & Implementation
- Emergency Planning & Response
- Equity & Environmental Justice and Healthy Communities
- Grant Writing
- Housing
- Mapping



Planning and Zoning



Transportation Planning
(including Bridge/Culvert
Inventory, REI & Traffic
Counts)

Designation



Designated Downtown



Designated Village

Municipal Bylaw Status

Adopted

Flood Only

None

Municipal Plan Status

Current

Expired



Mount Ascutney Regional Commission

FY 2023 Annual Report

The Mount Ascutney Regional Commission (MARC) is a compact of ten (10) municipalities in east-central Vermont. It was founded in 1966, and is a political subdivision of state government organized under 24 V.S.A. Sub-Chapter 3. The Commission serves the towns of Andover, Baltimore, Cavendish, Chester, Ludlow, Reading, Springfield, Weathersfield, West Windsor and Windsor. The MARC's activities and programs are governed by a ten-person Board of Commissioners; each appointed by the legislative body of their member town, with assistance from up to three "at-large" Commissioners as appointed by the Board of Commissioners. In addition, the Board has the responsibility of hiring staff to carry out the goals and policies of the MARC.

The primary intent of the MARC and its advisory committees has always been to assist with and advocate for the planning and development activities of its member towns. The MARC exists primarily to provide technical assistance to its member towns; assist in mediating inter-jurisdictional planning and development issues that arise between member communities; facilitate discussion and understanding between local and state entities; develop plans, policies, strategies, and procedures for addressing issues that are regional in scope; assist communities with downtown revitalization and community development projects; annually compile, review, and prioritize regional transportation improvement projects for submission to the Agency of Transportation; and to serve as an information resource for member towns and residents.

PLANNING & ZONING

RPCs act as a cost-effective professional planning staff for many of Vermont's municipalities. Work in recent years has been focused on improving town plans and local permitting through education and enhanced consultations (on-site training), bylaw modernization, facilitating transition to Development Review Boards, and implementing goals for economic development and flood resiliency. Current and clear plans and bylaws are essential in smooth state and local permitting. This work is supported through local and regional planning funds, local contributions and other grants. All technical assistance provided this year is shown on the At Work map; highlights include:

- Provided a range of services to assist with municipal plan updates and amendments for Baltimore, Cavendish, Springfield and Weathersfield.
- Helped planning commissions to prepare zoning bylaw updates in Andover, Chester, Ludlow, Reading, West Windsor and Windsor.
- Assisted with local efforts to implement municipal plans and supporting plans, including in Cavendish, Chester, Ludlow, Reading, Springfield, Weathersfield, West Windsor and Windsor.
- Served as the Interim Zoning Administrator for the Town of Windsor after their ZA retired mid-year.

- Provided technical support to Ludlow's Zoning Assistant, while the Director of Planning and Zoning was on extended leave.
- Assisted Windsor and Weathersfield with a shared services agreement for their planning and zoning offices.
- Assisted Cavendish to successfully apply for funding to develop a Capital Budget and Program.
- Assisted Ludlow to successfully apply for funding to develop a local housing needs assessment.

RPCs also coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan, and related studies. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors.

- The Regional Plan was updated following a multi-year outreach process, and adopted on October 14, 2022.
- Efforts this year to implement the Regional Plan included the following activities:
 - Reviewed all Act 250 applications and Section 248 petitions as each relates to goals and policies in the Regional Plan.
 - Assisting Reading with an ongoing village wastewater feasibility study.
 - Assisted Chester, Ludlow, Reading and West Windsor to modernize their bylaws to streamline the permitting process for housing that meets the community's needs.
 - Hired a consulting firm to develop a regional housing study that will identify sites within walkable village areas served by municipal infrastructure.

BROWNFIELDS

Environmental site assessments and clean-up allow properties to be sold, developed or re-developed in ways that benefit the local and state economy, increase housing opportunities, create or retain jobs and protect public health and the environment. MARC continues to manage an EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant and a Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund (RLF).

MARC has a contract with Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development to administer a statewide \$1 million Brownfields Assessment Grant Program that was funded in FY22 and FY23 through the Vermont Legislature. The program will provide assessment funding to RPCs statewide.

MARC also has a \$3.7 million contract with the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation for demolition and cleanup of the former Jones and Lamson site in Springfield. The first phase of the remediation process included targeted demolition and asbestos abatement.

MARC has provided brownfields assistance for 14 properties in 5 towns:

- Springfield: Jones and Lamson, 23-25 and 27-31 Main St., Park Street School, Former Bryant Chucking Grinder, Black River Innovation Campus (formerly Park St. School), Edgar May, Springfield Area Parent Child Center and the Clinton St. Waterline.
- Windsor: 7 Maple Street, 133-139 Main St. (Central & Main), Former Windsor Gas and Light, and the Windsor Railyards.
- Cavendish: Old Town Garage.
- Chester: Amsden Hill.
- Thetford: Former UVRLC Property.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with solid planning functions. To this end, RPCs work with towns and in strong partnership with Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) in several ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont for long term economic gain.

- Worked on CEDS priority projects as specified in the adopted CEDS.
- Continued to implement the recommendations of the Keys to the Valley housing initiative, including identifying potential sites for new housing development and assisting to establish a housing committee in Chester.
- Assisted the Windham and Windsor Housing Trust with community outreach for a 25-unit housing project in downtown Windsor.
- Engaged diverse organizations through MARC's various health and quality of life projects.
- Engaged community stakeholders, with targeted outreach to underserved populations, to conduct a region-wide food security survey and hold focus groups. Served on the Mt Ascutney Hospital food security steering committee and working groups.
- Assisted two towns with municipal health planning. Participated in three regional meetings held in partnership with Regional Planning Commissions and Vermont Public Health. Participated in four Green Peak Alliance and The Collaborative meetings.
- Provided grant administration and project management services to Springfield Regional Development Corporation for a \$1.2M Brownfields Revitalization Funds grant through the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development and a \$3.0M Community Project Fund (CPF) grant through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to advance cleanup and redevelopment of the Park Street School site for the Black River Innovation Business Incubator and Accelerator Campus project in Springfield, VT.
- Assisted four towns to understand and consider Neighborhood Development Area designation.
- Assisted the Bunker Hill mobile home community in Windsor to apply for funding to make critical improvements to their wastewater system.
- Working to develop a master plan of the former Windsor Prison site.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Through contract with the VTrans, RPCs coordinate the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort has provided a statewide framework for public involvement in planning the improvements to Vermont's transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the state's transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state and federal transportation network advancement.

Objective 1 - Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions and Municipalities		
Performance Indicator		Value
A	# of TAC meetings held	7
B	# of non-municipal TAC members actively engaged in transportation planning	8
C	# of municipalities actively engaged in transportation planning	8
D	# of RPC coordination activities with municipalities and VTrans	22
Objective 2 - Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning		
Performance Indicator		Value
E	# of regional transportation plans that are current (within 8 years)	1
F	# of Act 250 applications with RPC comments relating to transportation	0
G	# of Section 248 applications with RPC comments relating to transportation	0
H	# of coordination activities in support of regional public transit providers	4
I	# of VTrans committees that involves RPC staff participation	4
J	# of regions participating in Project Prioritization	1
Objective 3 - Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities		
Performance Indicator		Value
K	# of municipalities participating in road foreman meetings annually	6
L-1	# of municipalities assisted with transportation related grants	10
L-2	# of grant programs assisted municipalities with for transportation related grants	6
M	% of budget spent on municipal technical assistance	43%
N	# of municipal transportation inventories conducted	3
O	# of municipal transportation related feasibility/project definition studies completed/undertaken	1
P	# of municipalities assisted with transportation element of municipal/town plan	2
Q	# of road erosion inventories in support of the MRGP completed using TPI dollars and using other funding sources	0
Objective 4 - Deliver Results that Advance VTrans Strategic and Long Range Transportation Plans		
Performance Indicator		Value
R	# of data collection activities conducted specifically for VTrans	30
Objective 5 - Provide a Mechanism for Improved Public Outreach and Education		
Highlight of innovative, resourceful, and/or collaborative efforts from Region		
Report on unique examples of situations (unplanned events, addressing needs that arise, etc.) that occurred during the prior year in which the RPC conducted outreach or education beyond that of routine task efforts.		
List examples of innovative transportation planning efforts the RPC engaged in: <i>See Guidance for examples from prior reporting.</i>		
1	Applied for and was awarded a SS4A grant to develop a safety action plan to make towns eligible for future implementation funding	
2	Updated our Ride Windsor County bike route map and guide	
3	Assisted VTrans to ensure that Okemo disseminates their annual traffic monitoring report to all appropriate parties	

EMERGENCY PLANNING & RESPONSE

RPCs play key roles in the mitigation and preparedness phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont Emergency Management, the Vermont Homeland Security Unit, VTrans and the Agency of Natural Resources. RPCs provide direct staff to the State Emergency Operations Center, administrative support to the Local Emergency Planning Committees and coordination among responders and planners throughout the State's four Public Safety Districts. RPC's also help update floodplain bylaws and FEMA-required hazard mitigation plans, coordinate updates to municipal emergency plans, and assisted with declared disaster events.

- Ten municipalities in the region (100%) currently have an updated local emergency plan.
- Ten municipalities in the region (100%) currently have adopted hazard mitigation plans.
- Three towns protect river corridors or have interim protections that allow them a 17.5% ERAF rate.
- Assisted 10 towns with updates to their Local Emergency Management Plans this year.
- Assisted 4 towns with Local Hazard Mitigation Plan updates this year.
- Served as Local Liaison during storm events.
- Provided technical assistance with buyout questions and application of flood-damaged properties in Cavendish, Chester and Ludlow.
- Prepared amendments to the Flood Resilience Chapter of the Springfield Town Plan.
- Assisted West Windsor with flood hazard and river corridor bylaws.
- Conducted outreach to municipalities on the ongoing FEMA special flood hazard map updates.
- Continued to provide guidance to Cavendish and Ludlow with flood hazard and/or river corridor review under MOUs with each municipality.

MAPPING

In addition to enhancing the RPC work, RPC's provide municipalities, state agencies and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of their projects.

- Highlights of activities:
 - Prepared maps for municipal plans, zoning bylaws and other planning projects.
 - Continued to work with VTrans, RPCs, and a consultant to develop, launch, and provide ongoing support for a revamped version of VTCulverts.
 - Continued to integrate "ArcGIS Field Maps" into regular fieldwork activities.
 - Updated GIS mapping data of municipal water and sewer systems to better inform housing initiatives and other planning efforts.

ENERGY PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION

A renewed focus on clean, renewable, sustainable and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunities and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation and natural resources efforts, and work with municipalities to assist with project

implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process.

- Assisted local energy committees and other municipal officials to implement energy plans.
- Facilitated local energy committee roundtable meetings.
- Participated in the review process for multiple energy projects (Section 248).
- Provided guidance to local officials on Act 174 and enhanced local energy plans.
- Assisted the towns of Cavendish and Weathersfield with local energy planning.
- Assisted VT Buildings and General Services to roll out the Municipal Energy Resilience Program.

CLEAN WATER

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to assist with completion of the EPA required watershed plans. RPCs also work with municipalities to implement river corridor assessments in local planning and regulations which result in better and safer growth management decisions.

- Supported the efforts of 7 towns to construct road drainage improvements under the Grants-in-Aid program bringing many priority town road segments into compliance with the Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP) drainage standards.
- Assisted the Town of Springfield with fundraising and provided project management assistance for the removal of the Springfield Reservoir Dam in Weathersfield, removal of the Valley Street dam, and remediation of the Lincoln Street mass slope failure.
- Provided grant writing and project management assistance to the Town of Windsor to construct stormwater improvements at the Mount Ascutney Hospital and Health Center campus to help mitigate erosion in Paradise Park.
- Continued to assist municipalities to better understand flood resiliency and to consider adoption of ANR's model river corridor bylaws.
- Continued to administer a multi-million-dollar block grant program under contract to the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) to support clean water projects on a state-wide basis.
- Continued to assist ANR in support of updating the Basin 10 Tactical Basin Plan.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

- MARC assisted the Town of West Windsor to apply for grant funding to develop a feasibility study of moving the Fire Station out of the floodplain to a safer location.

JULY 2023 SUMMER FLOODING

Municipalities in MARC's jurisdiction were hit hard by the summer 2024 flooding events including, but not limited to, Ludlow, Cavendish, Chester, Andover, Reading and West Windsor. MARC staff spent a considerable amount of time supporting the state emergency response as well as helping our communities and residents. This work included:

- Set up a flood resources page on the marcv.org website and kept the resources up to date.
- Posted timely informational updates on MARC's Facebook and website, and maintained regular messaging via Constant Contact.
- Served as Local Liaisons during the activation periods for the storms on July 7, 9 and 14. Reviewed Sit Reports and attended statewide situational awareness briefings. Followed up with towns to collect information, and made updates to WebEOC entries.
- Facilitated communication between the SEOC, municipalities and VTrans. Connected municipalities with the SEOC and resource agencies to communicate needs. Responded to and followed up on town requests for equipment, materials, etc.
- Attended various meetings to keep up with information and relay it to municipalities, including a floodplain manager discussion with DEC, NRCS meeting, and DEC and VLCN calls.
- Multiple staff attended the Substantial Damage training to better support town zoning administrators.
- Helped to staff Multi-Agency Resource Centers as needed per IFNRTF.
- Provided technical assistance to municipalities on procurement policy.
- Hosted status meetings with town managers/administrators to share information and provide support and guidance.
- Assisted municipalities whose local emergency operations plans and/or local hazard mitigation plans expired or were about to expire. MARC staff helped make very quick updates to ensure that all affected municipalities took full advantage of their ERAF local match status.
- Assisted West Windsor related to additional damage from the July 21 storm.
- Provided technical assistance to Cavendish and Ludlow with substantial damage assessments and flood hazard permit review.

ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING

The MARC is funded by performance and project contracts with federal, state and local levels of government, foundation support, and contributions from member municipalities. MARC's FY 2023 budget was \$1,741,824. Core funding provided by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development of \$311,069 leveraged about \$302,000 in additional federal sources.

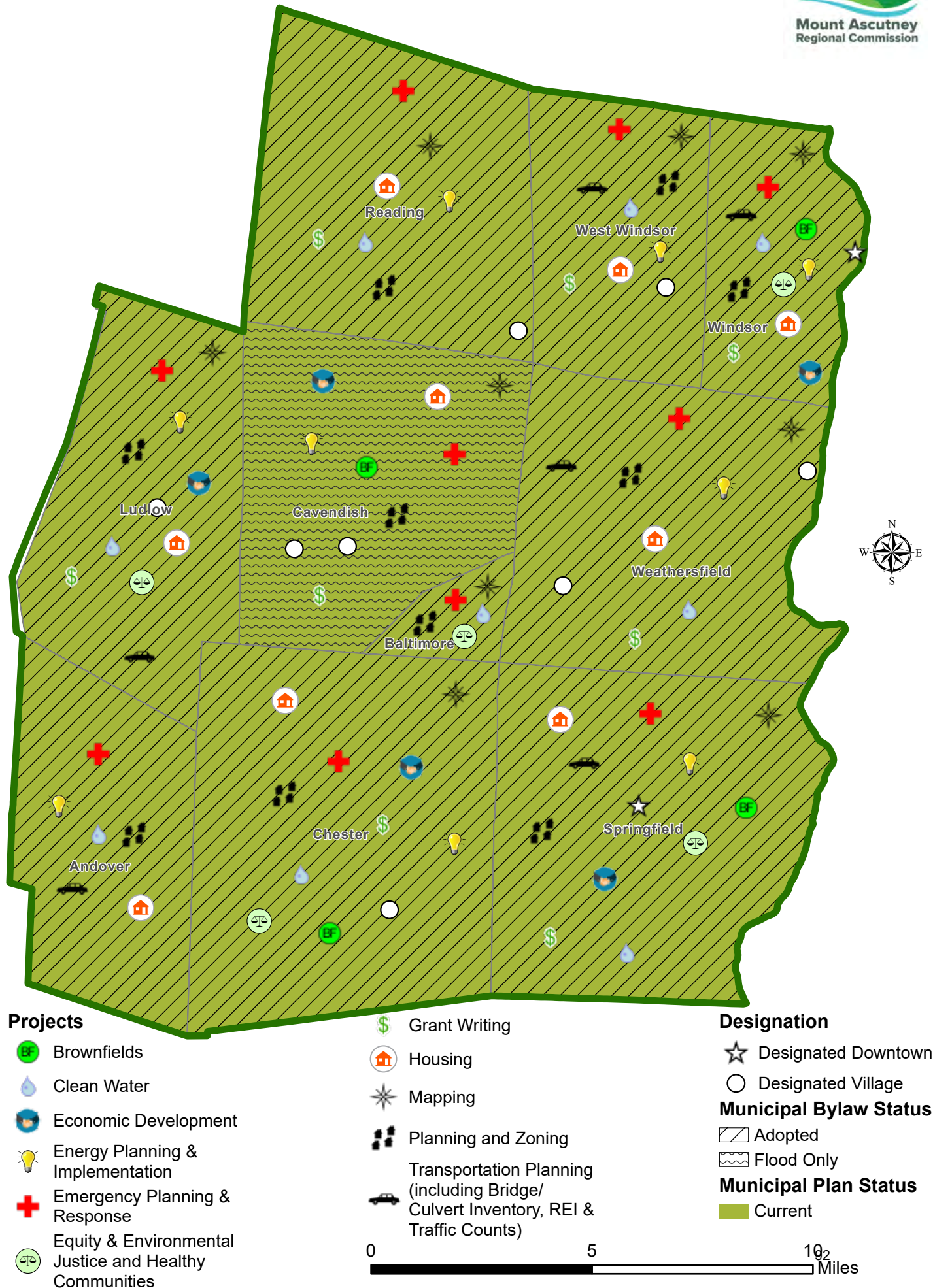
MARC has an annual independent audit conducted by Certified Public Accountants. A single audit was not necessary for the past fiscal year. No significant findings nor material weaknesses have been identified this year.

MARC serves 10 municipalities and operates with a Board of Commissioners that develops and implements policies and oversees a staff of 14.

'AT WORK' MAP

The map depicting the range of services provided by the MARC to member municipalities is included on the next page.

MARC at Work: FY 2023



Northwest Regional Planning Commission

FY 2023 Annual Report

The Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) serves the 23 municipalities (19 towns, 3 incorporated villages, and 1 city) located in Franklin and Grand Isle Counties in northwestern Vermont.

Municipalities in the region appoint two representatives to serve on the Board of Commissioners. This board governs the policies and activities of the Commission and elects an Executive Committee and officers to oversee NRPC programs and staff. The Mission of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission is:

- To assist local municipalities, through education, technical assistance, grants and funding; and to aid municipalities in their planning efforts as authorized by Vermont planning laws.
- To serve as a center for information and as a resource to support the region and its municipalities' interests, growth patterns and common goals.
- To provide a forum for the discussion of issues which are regional in nature and/or unique to our area of the state, and to serve as a mediator to resolve conflicts as appropriate. Common sense and a spirit of compromise must be allowed to enter the discussion so that the impacts of development may be mitigated.
- To conduct regional planning programs.

PLANNING & ZONING

RPCs act as a cost-effective professional planning staff for many of Vermont's municipalities. Work in recent years has been focused on improving town plans and local permitting through education and on-site training, bylaw modernization and implementing municipal planning requirements for economic development, flood resiliency and forest blocks and habitat connections. Current and clear plans and bylaws are essential in smooth state and local permitting. This work is supported through local and regional planning funds, local contributions, and other grants. All technical assistance provided this year is shown on the At Work map; highlights include:

- Served as the zoning administrator for Sheldon and Highgate under a municipal services agreement.
- Completed workshops attended by municipal staff and volunteers from most municipalities. Topics included: Essentials of Land Use Planning, Zoning Administrator Roundtable, Open Meeting Law and Regional Housing Needs.
- Completed Connecting Sheldon, a strategic planning effort to identify opportunities for bike/ped connections between village and recreation amenities, funded by a Municipal Planning Grant.
- Completed a Richford Streetscape Master Plan focusing on the Main and River Streets in the village center, funded by a Municipal Planning Grant.
- Continued work on a consortium bylaw modernization project that considers how bylaw regulations can act as a barrier to achieving affordable housing options and works with participating communities to develop bylaw changes that overcome this barrier. The project is funded by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development's Bylaw Modernization Program with a consortium grant to St. Albans Town (lead), Highgate, Enosburgh, Montgomery and Sheldon.

- Provided support to the Town of Highgate on redevelopment planning for the Village Core property, which will include a new town library and community center in addition to other mixed-use development. Support was given on the topics of brownfields assessment and, wastewater and water supply funding, feasibility and design.
- Completed a Town Plan update for the Town of South Hero. This project was funded by a Vermont Municipal Planning Grant.
- Completed a Town Plan update for the Town of Highgate.
- Initiated a project to merge and update the zoning regulations of the Town of Enosburgh and Village of Enosburg Falls.
- Assisted the Berkshire Planning Commission with a minor update of their zoning regulations focused on accessory on-farm businesses, adaptive re-use and home industries.
- Initiated a Town Plan update for the town of Montgomery. This project is funded by a Vermont Municipal Planning Grant.
- Initiated a Town Plan update for the Town of Alburgh with a focus on Alburgh Village and recreation.
- Initiated a Town Plan update for the Town of Grand Isle with a focus on a vision for a municipal town center and making the plan more accessible.
- Initiated a basic Town Plan update for the Town of Sheldon.
- Provided technical support to the Town of North Hero for a zoning bylaw update.
- Answered general planning and zoning technical assistance questions for Alburgh, Bakersfield, Berkshire, Enosburgh, Enosburg Falls, Fairfax, Fairfield, Fletcher, Franklin, Georgia, Grand Isle, Highgate, Montgomery, North Hero, Richford, Sheldon, St. Albans City and South Hero.

RPCs also coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan, and related studies. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors.

The Northwest Regional Plan was adopted by the Board of Commissioners in June 2023. NRPC expects to make updates in FY24 to address new requirements for the enhanced energy plan, to ensure the housing element complies with the HOME Act and to incorporate recommendations from VAPDA's study on future land use map consistency.

NRPC publishes an online indicator report with [regularly updated online data](#) to show progress on the goals of the regional plan.

NRPC reviews state permit applications to ensure proposed projects conform with the regional plan. The Project Review Committee reviewed ten Section 248 applications and nine Act 250 minor applications) for conformance with the regional plan. No Act 250 major applications were submitted this fiscal year. Of Act 250 applications, the Committee determined that all but one of the projects conformed with the Regional Plan. The Committee also found one Section 248a telecommunications project not in conformance with the Regional Plan.

BROWNFIELDS

Vermont RPCs have sought and have been awarded over \$10 million for this economic development initiative. Environmental site assessments allow properties to be sold, developed or re-developed in ways that benefit the local and state economy, create or protect jobs and increase housing opportunities. NRPC currently has 2 active EPA Brownfields grants, including one Revolving Loan Fund and one assessment grant. During FY23, the following projects were either finished, ongoing or started:

Assessment Projects:

- *6 South River Street, Swanton.* NRPC funded a phase 2 assessment and supplemental assessment at the 6 South River Street property owned by the Village of Swanton. The Village bought the dilapidated historic hotel property to facilitate its cleanup and redevelopment. NRPC is currently funding an evaluation of corrective action alternatives.
- *74 Lower Welden Street, St. Albans City.* NRPC is funding a corrective action plan for the site of former Green Mount Power cooling ponds. The City of St. Albans is cleaning the site to use for surface stormwater treatment for their downtown.
- *Maquam Bay of Missisquoi of the Abenaki, Swanton.* NRPC is funding a phase 2 assessment at the Abenaki of Missisquoi Headquarters on Grand Avenue in Swanton. The tribe is addressing contamination ahead of a planned renovation to expand use of the facility for a cultural resource center.

Cleanup Projects:

- *6 South River Street, Swanton.* NRPC awarded the Village of Swanton a cleanup sub-grant for \$25,917 to address asbestos and lead paint abatement at the former Riviere Hotel, ahead of demolition. This was the first step towards cleanup of the entire site.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with solid planning functions. RPCs work with municipalities and Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) to this end in several ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont for long term economic gain.

NRPC coordinates the [Northern Vermont Economic Development District \(NVEDD\)](#) in partnership with the three RDCs and RPCs in the six northern counties. An advisory board helped to create a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy that was approved by EDA and is updated [annually](#). NRPC serves as the administrative coordinator for NVEDD. NRPC provides grant administrative support for Northern Borders Regional Commission grantees.

Through an EDA pandemic recovery grant, the Northern Vermont Economic Development District (NVEDD) partners had 3 disaster recovery coordinators in the three Regional Planning Commissions in our district, and provided technical assistance to local entities navigating economic recovery. NRPC continues to coordinate outreach to local officials and businesses and work with the NVEDD Board regarding the economic impacts of the pandemic.

- Assisted the City of St. Albans administer and close out a VCDP Implementation Grant on behalf of the City of St. Albans for property acquisition and renovation of the Almond Blossoms Schoolhouse, enabling an expansion of a childcare facility.
- Provided project management support to the Alburgh Family Clubhouse, a local 501c3 organization, for the construction of a new childcare center to be located on donated property just north of the Village. Assisted the Town of Alburgh administer a Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) Planning Grant for pre-development and planning work related to the construction of the new childcare facility.
- Provided NBRC administrative support to the Town of Fletcher for a Broadband project, and to the Town of Highgate for a water/wastewater expansion.
- Supported the Town of Bakersfield with a grant to examine redevelopment of Brigham Academy for housing and community space.
- With an Economic Development Administration disaster resiliency grant, worked to complete agricultural resiliency projects including supporting local food distribution, developing an agricultural apprenticeship program in partnership with Community College of VT and area technical centers, expanding the gleaning program, and education for municipal officials on local actions to support agriculture.
- Assisted the Town of South Hero with grant management for predevelopment and planning work associated with a renovation of the historic South Hero Meeting House.
- Assisted the Town of Fairfield with managing a VCDP CARES Act grant to construct an outdoor pavilion at the Fairfield Community Center.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Through contract with the VTrans, RPCs coordinate the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort has provided a statewide framework for public involvement in planning the improvements to Vermont's transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the state's transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state and federal transportation network advancement.

Objective 1

Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions and Municipalities

# of TAC meetings held	9
# of non-municipal TAC members actively engaged in transportation planning via the TAC meetings	10
# of municipalities actively engaged in transportation planning	12
# of RPC coordination activities with municipalities and VTrans	4

Objective 2

Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning

# of regional transportation plans that are current (within 8 years)	1
# of Act 250 applications with RPC comments relating to transportation	7

# of Section 248 applications with RPC comments relating to transportation	3
# of coordination activities in support of regional public transit providers	5
# of VTrans committees that involves RPC staff participation	1
# of regions participating in Project Prioritization	1

Objective 3

Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities

# of municipalities participating in road foreman meetings annually	0
Total # of programs that RPCs municipalities assisted with transportation related grants	15
% of budget spent on municipal technical assistance	55
# of municipal transportation inventories conducted	2
# of municipal transportation related feasibility/project definition studies completed/undertaken	3
# of municipalities assisted with transportation element of municipal/town plan	5
# of road erosion inventories in support of the MRGP completed using TPI dollars and using other funding sources	3

Objective 4

Deliver Results that Advance VTrans Strategic and Long Range Transportation Plans

# of data collection activities conducted specifically for VTrans	32
-------------------------------------------------------------------	----

Grants In Aid. For FY23 there are 237 municipalities participating in the Best Management Practices program, with 21 municipalities in our region. 14 of those have agreements with NRPC for assistance in the following areas:

- Reviewing existing municipal road erosion inventory maps and data to identify eligible projects.
- Holding pre-construction meeting(s) with the municipal staff to select project location(s), segment start and end points, and identify specific Best Management Practices (BMPs) for each project segment.
- Preparing project documentation for municipality to submit to VTrans in order to receive Construction Authorization.
- Assisting with documenting project completion and required reporting in the [Reporter for the Municipal Roads General Permit](#).
- Assisting with preparing and/or reviewing invoicing materials, if needed.

Transportation Planning Highlights. NRPC worked closely with VTrans Operations & Safety Bureau to facilitate a Road Safety Audit Review (RSAR) along VT 105 between St. Albans and Enosburgh. Members from the towns of Sheldon, St. Albans, Swanton, and Village of Enosburgh Falls attended; along with representatives from Vermont State Police and AmCare Ambulance Service. The RSAR was organized as a result of increased number of crashes, both serious and fatal, along the corridor. The published RSAR includes a number of opportunities for potential mitigating actions which could be applied by towns, law enforcement, NRPC, VTrans, and others.

EMERGENCY PLANNING & RESPONSE

RPCs play key roles in the mitigation and preparedness phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont Emergency Management, Vermont Agency of Transportation and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. RPCs provide direct staff to the State Emergency Operations Center, local Emergency Operations Centers, administrative support to the Regional Emergency Management Committees and coordination among Emergency Management Directors, Emergency Management Coordinators, first responders, planners and stakeholders throughout the State. RPC's also help update floodplain bylaws, write flood resiliency sections of municipal plans and FEMA-required hazard mitigation plans, coordinate updates to municipal emergency operations plans and assist as needed in special circumstances such as the July 2023 statewide flood disaster, Covid-19 pandemic, the 2019 Halloween Storm, Tropical Storm Irene and the Lake Champlain Flood in 2011, and other state declared and local disasters. Twenty municipalities (90%) in the region currently have an updated local emergency management plan. Sixteen municipalities (75%) of municipalities in the region currently have a local hazard mitigation plan either adopted or under review. During the last fiscal year, NRPC:

- Staffed the Grand Isle County Mutual Aid Association, Grand Isle Regional Emergency Management Committee and the Franklin County Regional Emergency Management Committee, as well as the greater St. Albans Area Incident Management team. The activities include improving capacity to respond to all-hazards incidents, delivering EM related trainings, ensuring that municipalities have hazard mitigation plans in place, and updating Local Emergency Management Plans (LEMPs).
- Served as the Local Liaison to municipalities for the Planning Section and Situational Awareness Unit of the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) following severe weather events including the severe wind event in late December 2022, extreme cold event in February 2023, and extreme heat event in May 2023. Duties include establishing direct contact with municipal EMDs /EMCs to assess damages, compiling damage assessments in coordination with Vermont Agency of Transportation and Department of Environmental Conservation and reporting local damages to the Planning Section of the SEOC and supporting local cooling and warming shelter planning and operations.
- Staff supported the Planning and Engagement Sections of the SEOC in response to State of Emergency for the July 2023 flooding event. Staff provided direct support to municipalities that had flood related damages but were not included in the Federal Disaster including serving as liaison for damage reporting to SEOC, assisting FEMA and Small Business Administration in surveying residential damage sites in Fairfax and St. Albans City and Town, supporting Lamoille County Regional Planning Commission in recovery efforts, providing GIS mapping for Cambridge and Fairfax, assisting residents with navigating local, state and federal resources for home repair, supporting the state's Individual and Family Needs Recovery Task Force and assisting state agencies with emergency housing tasks.
- Served on the State Training and Exercise Planning Working Group which oversees Vermont's three-year emergency Training and Exercise Plan.
- Served on the State Individual and Family Assistance Task Force which coordinates immediate and long-term recovery efforts to meet the basic housing and subsistence needs of affected individuals and families following a disaster. The team was activated in response to July 2023 flooding event.

- Provided data and grant assistance to municipalities for municipal resiliency efforts including applications for the Flood Resilient Communities Fund, Building Resilient Infrastructure Communities, Flood Mitigation Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

MAPPING

In addition to enhancing the RPC work, RPCs provide municipalities, state agencies and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of their projects.

- Completed town plan & zoning maps for municipalities updating their plans and bylaws. Any new or updated zoning shapefiles are added to the Vermont Open Geodata Portal website yearly (<https://geodata.vermont.gov/>).
- Prepared and updated Village Designation Maps for communities seeking village designation and renewal.
- Completed [E911 Community Maps](#) for all municipalities for use by town officials, emergency responders and others.
- Printed and mailed out any VTrans Highway maps to municipalities that wanted an updated map.
- Updated all the maps for the newly adopted 2023 Northwest Regional Plan.

ENERGY PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION

A renewed focus on clean, renewable, sustainable and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunity and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation and natural resources efforts, and work with municipalities to assist with project implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process.

- NRPC Executive Director serves as the Rural Representative on the VT Climate Council and Co-Chairs the Rural Resiliency and Adaptation Subcommittee.
- Organized and completed a WindowDressers community build which provided 144 inserts to 17 families, many of which were free inserts for low-income families.
- Supported Swanton Energy Committee in organizing and hosting educational events on heat pumps and electric vehicles, agricultural incentive/tech event, and Walk to Shop events.
- Assisted in the creation and development of a Civilian Conservation Corps for the northwest region.
- Continued work with the Municipal Climate Resiliency Toolkit workgroup.
- Working on updated data for the regional enhanced energy plan, as well as updating the plan overall.
- Presenting to students on green careers and connecting them to internships and other opportunities to get involved.
- Supporting Walk/Bike Saint Albans in their work to increase bike and pedestrian infrastructure in St. Albans.
- Leading a Franklin Elementary School week long summer camp on sustainability.

CLEAN WATER

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to assist with completion of the EPA-required watershed plans and implementation of the Lake Champlain and Lake Carmi TMDLs. RPCs also work

with municipalities to incorporate river corridor assessments and flood mapping in local plans and regulations. This results in better and safer growth management decisions. Some RPCs have additional responsibilities as Clean Water Service Providers (CWSPs) and are charged with pursuing projects that reduce the amount of phosphorus reaching Vermont's waterways and lakes. NRPC is the only RPC to serve as CWSP for two Vermont river basins.

- Evaluated floodplain and river corridor bylaws for compliance with FEMA standards as part of statewide floodplain mapping update. Funded by Vermont DEC via the Lamoille County Planning Commission.
- Assisted the state's Watershed Coordinator with implementation activities in the Northern Lake Champlain, Missisquoi Bay, and Lamoille Basins.
- Participated in planning and public engagement activities with partner organizations in the Northern Lake Champlain, Missisquoi Bay, and Lamoille Basins.
- Completed project development for 14 water quality improvement projects in partnership with multiple organizations (Regional Planning Commissions, Conservation Districts, local watershed organizations). Work was funded by a VT Department of Environmental Conservation Partnership Block Grant to NRPC.
- Oversaw contracting for and implementation of projects on two private roads in the Lake Carmi watershed. Funded by a grant from the Lake Champlain Basin Program to NRPC.
- Coordinated project bidding and contracting for Trout River streambank restoration work. Funded by two grants from the Vermont Agency of Transportation.
- Continued to steward the Missisquoi Bay and Lamoille Basin Water Quality Councils (BWQC) and participate as member of Northern Lake Champlain BWQC.
- Support provided to BWQCs included conducting two project funding rounds in each basin. NRPC directed funding to partners for three projects in Lamoille Basin and five projects in Missisquoi Basin.
- As CWSP, also continued to develop and apply grant-management, project tracking, and project prioritization systems. Also continued to provide extensive input to DEC regarding the development of guidance materials, including materials focused on project operation and maintenance.
- Continued to support St. Albans City and St. Albans Town and their Regional Stormwater Education Program as partial fulfillment of MS4 permit obligations. With assistance from partners, organized several stream clean ups and workshops, and conducted major lake-themed storytelling and student education events.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Healthy Roots

HRC promotes the local food economy with programs supporting farm and food businesses, local food access and gleaning. Two staff members oversee the programs with input from an advisory committee of farmers, producers and buyers. This year, Healthy Roots Collaborative worked directly with 65 growers and makers through, in-person and virtual events, with 5 farms receiving one-on-one technical assistance for sales and marketing development. Additional highlights from this year include:

- 50,170 of produce gleaned, recovered and purchased delivered to 37 recipient sites throughout Franklin and Grand Isle Counties.

- 10 CSAs were a part of the pilot year of the Northwest Farmacy CSA developed in partnership with the NOTCH Richford Health Center. 10 individuals received weekly CSAs sourced from local farms over the course of 14 weeks.
- HRC also regularly provided locally grown, culturally preferred produce to 31 migrant households in partnership with NorthWest Family Foods and Bridges to Health.
- 50,687 meals delivered through the Everyone Eats program. 9 local restaurants participated in the program and each meal used ~35% local ingredients on average.
- \$488,000 was brought into the community to purchase local food through Everyone Eats, Northwest Farmacy CSA and Migrant Household Food Boxes.
- 160 students participated in Healthy Roots gleaning and food access programming. 2 of the participating schools engaged in the harvesting and/or processing of traditional Abenaki crops.
- With funding from EDA, HRC was able to purchase a refrigerated trailer and hybrid truck to support HRC's gleaning and food access program.
- In partnership with CVOEO, HRC started planning for the renovation of storage space in Sheldon, donated by the Abbey Group.
- 40% more gleaned produce was moved through FGI, compared to the preceding year.

Northwest Vermont Communications Union District

NRPC continued providing administrative, governance support and project management assistance to the Northwest Vermont Communications Union District (dba Northwest Fiberworx). This Unit of Local Government, made of representatives from communities within the region (plus Milton in Chittenden County) was formed in 2020 to support the expansion of broadband services in the Region. Highlights from the past year include supporting the CUD in partnering a Services Providers for joint ventures in delivery of broadband infrastructure and services; providing technical assistance to the NWCUD Governing Board, subcommittees and staff in developing administrative policies and assist with governance structures. Attend meetings of Governing Board and subcommittees as necessary or by request. The goal of Northwest Fiberworx is to deliver reliable, affordable high-speed internet to unserved and underserved residents in the region.

Housing For All- Working Communities Challenge

Northwest Regional Planning Commission serves as the backbone organization for a region-wide project focused on supporting the creation and improvement of housing for healthy, inclusive, and prosperous communities. The project is funded by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston as part of the Working Communities Challenge (WCC) initiative. The project has:

- Published the 2022 Northwest Housing Needs Assessment;
- Hosted a series of events, including a Community Conversation on Housing, Municipal Officials Meetings on Housing, a workshop on creating Accessory Dwelling Units; a Housing Justice Joint Worship Service.
- Created a Housing Community of Practice among the WCC initiatives working on housing issues;
- Started production of Voices From Home, a video series capturing how the region's people have navigated the housing crisis.

Equity and Inclusion

The NRPC Board underwent a year-long education effort to understand equity and inclusion issues and hired Abundant Sun to aid in these efforts. NRPC adopted a statement of inclusion in FY22 and is identifying changes to plans, practices and programs in order to implement the goals of the statement. While the contract with Abundant Sun ended in February of 2023, NRPC continues to engage in education and efforts to understand equity and inclusion in our work on an ongoing basis. A summary of outcomes from our work over the last year is provided below:

- Adopted Code of Conduct for Board members (5/31/2023).
- Yearlong contract with Abundant Sun to provide ongoing ethical leadership training to the board (culminated in February 2023).
- Incorporated equity principles into the draft Regional Plan (adopted 7/26/23).
- Promoted Racial Justice Housing Jam to board members and staff.
- Applied to the EPA Environmental Justice Government to Government Program (EJG2G) for a grant award to accelerate and streamline equitable active transportation projects in our rural communities.
- Participated in the Department of Health's Health Equity Project, including developing municipal training opportunities (for FY24), Health Equity and Planning Toolkit, and working with the Town of Alburgh to incorporate health equity in its municipal plan.
- Worked with the South Hero Planning Commission to incorporate equity and justice into its municipal plan.

ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING

NRPC owns its building at 75 Fairfield Street in St. Albans, purchased in 2013. This provides budget certainty and enables NRPC to hold and manage an asset rather than pay rent. Planned renovation costs over the next three years are included in the budget and budget reserves, and the Board has adopted an accelerated mortgage repayment plan. Annual building expenses are projected to decline within ten years of purchase. NRPC staff has started to work more regular hours in the office during FY23, with most staff working in the office from 1-4 days per week.

The Board utilizes a reserve fund policy for long term financial planning. NRPC maintains Board designated reserve funds to cover operating shortfalls, accrued leave time, building renovations and equipment replacement. The Commission maintains a three-year plan for equipment and software upgrades and replacement.

The FY 22 NRPC budget was \$3.3 million. This was reduced significantly from FY22 due to NRPC no longer managing the Municipal Grants in Aid program which accounted for \$3.8 million of the FY22 budget. Revenue sources included state and federal performance contracts, grants and local assessments. Virtually all the NRPC's revenue sources are tied to contracts with scopes of work, guidelines and/or performance measures. This means that the NRPC has limited flexibility in how it chooses to use the vast majority of its funding. Funding received through municipal assessments is the exception, which makes this funding stream particularly important because it gives us the greatest latitude to respond to NRPC-identified needs in the region. The grants we receive enable us to work with our towns on areas such as transportation, emergency planning, community development, brownfields redevelopment, energy, and natural resources. Revenue from virtually all federal and state grantors requires non-federal matching funds ranging from 10 percent (Transportation Planning Initiative) to 50 percent (Emergency Management Planning Grant). Municipal assessments and regional

planning funds passed through to NRPC under a performance contract with the Department of Housing and Community Development provide matching funds required by grantors.

An audit is currently underway and will be completed in the fall of 2023. NRPC has had no audit findings in over ten years. Staffing in FY 23 included: Executive Director, Assistant Director, Senior Planners (3), Regional Planner, Project Manager, Climate and Energy Planner, Planning Technician, GIS Technician, Office Administrator, Economic Recovery Coordinator, Healthy Roots Coordinators (2), Working Communities Challenge Manager, and interns (3). Six of the employees have been with NRPC for fifteen years or more. An Eco-AmeriCorps employee also joined NRPC in FY 22.

‘AT WORK’ MAP

The map depicting the range of services provided by the NRPC to member municipalities is included on the next page.

NRPC at Work: FY 2023



Projects

- Brownfields
- Clean Water
- Economic Development
- Energy Planning & Implementation
- Emergency Planning & Response
- Equity & Environmental Justice and Healthy Communities
- Grant Writing
- Mapping
- Planning and Zoning
- Transportation Planning (including Bridge/Culvert Inventory, REI & Traffic Counts)

Designation

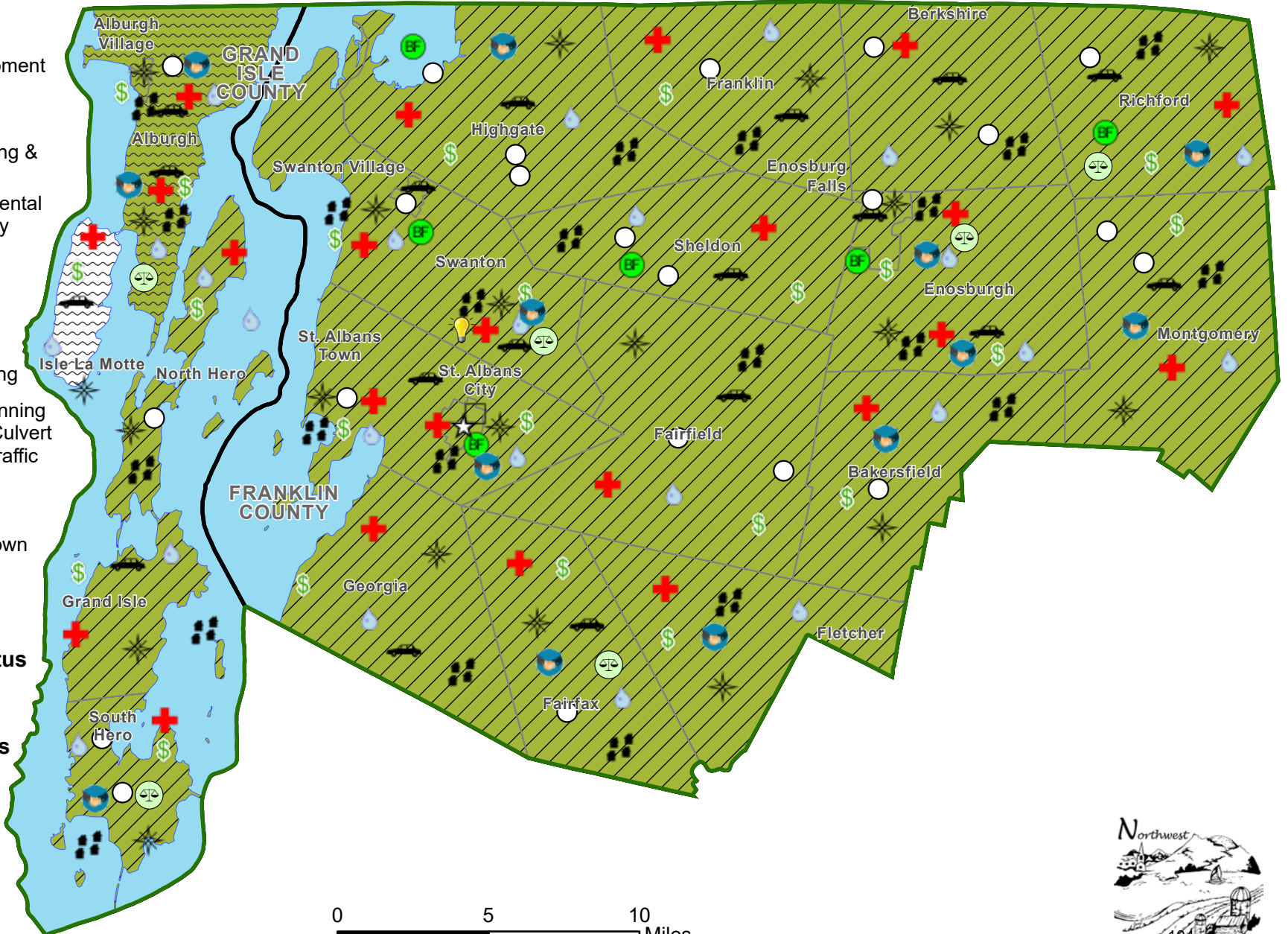
- Designated Downtown
- Designated Village
- Designated Growth Center

Municipal Bylaw Status

- Adopted
- Flood Only

Municipal Plan Status

- Current
- No Town Plan
- County Boundary



Northeastern Vermont Development Association

FY 2023 Annual Report

Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA) serves the three counties (Caledonia, Essex, and Orleans) that make up the beautiful Northeast Kingdom region of Vermont. The NEK is home to roughly one-tenth of the state's population, spread over one-fifth of the state's land mass. This vast and mostly rural region has a complexity of needs, with towns falling into one of six labor market areas and seven basin planning areas. The NEK has three designated downtowns, 40 designated village centers, and is a USDA-designated economic planning area. NVDA is one of only two regional entities that serves as both the regional planning commission and the economic development corporation, so our staff often wear multiple hats when assisting a member community.

PLANNING & ZONING

Only a handful of our member communities have full-time planning staff, so NVDA is often the first organization called for assistance when it comes to municipal plan development, zoning bylaw development, grant writing, and plan implementation projects. Here are some of our service highlights for FY2023:

- **New Downtown Designation:** In FY2022, NVDA helped the Town of Hardwick obtain a Municipal Planning Grant to hire a consultant and prepare its application for Downtown Designation. In FY2023, Hardwick Village became the region's third Designated Downtown, joining St. Johnsbury and Newport City. NVDA's Regional Plan for the Northeast Kingdom has long considered Hardwick an emerging urban center, so this designation will certainly help to elevate the community's importance to the region.
- **Neighborhood Development Area:** In May 2023, a portion of St Johnsbury's Summerville neighborhood received designation as a Neighborhood Development Area (NDA). Designation benefits include Act 250 considerations, tax credits, relief from certain ANR fees, special permit and tax exemptions, and priority consideration for state grants. This designation – a first for the NEK -- encourages municipalities and developers to plan for new and infill housing in areas within walking distance of a designated downtown. Concurrent to the NDA approval, St. Johnsbury's Downtown re-Designation was approved for another eight years.
- **Municipal Planning Grants:** This program remains the lifeblood for our communities' planning and revitalization efforts. In FY23, NVDA was instrumental in securing a consortium grant for Lyndon, Brighton, Burke, and St. Johnsbury to develop a regional lodging needs assessment and feasibility study. The study will provide a framework to site and develop lodging accommodations to support the region's growing recreational economy. Also in FY23, the Town of Craftsbury commenced a plan update that incorporates a stronger vision for priority habitat blocks, as well as recommendations for the Village Master Plan, which was also completed with MPG funds.
- **Grant administration:** NVDA has continued to represent municipalities and non-profits in grant administration, most notably with the Village Improvement Society and the Town of Lyndon as they look to improve Powers Park through a planning grant from the Vermont

Community Development Program. The aim of the grant will be to bring greater accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities while bringing greater participation from low-moderate income communities nearby. Also this year, NVDA staff continued to administer a Vermont Community Development Program grant on behalf of the Town of Craftsbury to support major upgrades to heating, ventilation, and energy efficiency at the Craftsbury Community Care Center, a 24-bed senior residential facility and major employer in the community.

- **Housing Improvements:** In FY23, NVDA served on the advisory committee for the St. Johnsbury Rental Improvement Grant Program. This initiative, which offers grants to landlords to make rental units more livable, continues to set an example for other communities to address the current housing crisis. Through its EPA Brownfields program, NVDA continued to assist important housing projects in St. Johnsbury and Newport.
- **Community Revitalization:** In FY2023, NVDA staff participated in a Vermont Council on Rural Development “Community Visit” in Concord. This intensive community engagement culminated in an October 2022 report that identifies three priority initiatives: attract businesses and industry to Concord; bring a store back to the community; and clean up and improve Miles Pond Beach. Also in FY23, NVDA staff wrapped up their participation in the Brownington Community Visit. The August 2022 report identifies the following initiatives that will result in a stronger economy and community: expand local events; improve road safety and maintenance; and boost local food access, agriculture, and business. Staff is currently working with the Town to complete their new Town Plan, which will help to carry these initiatives forward. Finally, NVDA has been gearing up to assist the Towns of Walden and Lunenburg as they develop their first ever town plans.
- **Better Connections:** With application assistance from NVDA, Hardwick is the latest community in our region to access this grant program to increase multi-modal transportation options in support of economic vitality. The Town will create a revitalization plan for East Hardwick village that will guide future economic development, land use, and transportation infrastructure investments and provide better connections to the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail. An NVDA staff planner is also supporting efforts to “Revamp the ‘Ville”, Lyndon’s Better Connections project, which seeks to improve walking, cycling, and rolling in downtown Lyndonville, as well as improve the look and feel of the downtown and enhance small business activity. Work on implementing the master plan that resulted from Danville’s Better Connections grant continues as well. An NVDA planner continues to serve on the Danville Train Station Committee, which is focused on reviving the historic structure as a transportation and recreation hub along the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail. Construction on the Train Station is expected to commence shortly.

Regional Planning Commissions also coordinate planning in their respective regions through the adoption and implementation of comprehensive regional plan and related studies. NVDA's plan was updated and readopted this summer, but we have commenced work on a completely new regional plan for release next year. The new plan will be reorganized along major themes such as equity, community empowerment, sustainability, and relevance to the community.

- **Professional Development and Associations:** In FY2023, NVDA staff continued its longstanding tradition of lending professional expertise through participation on boards and regional organizations. Participatory efforts included the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative, Vermont Community Development Association, Rural Community Transportation, Vermont Council on Rural Development, NEK Collaborative, and the NEK Broadband CUD.
- **Lamoille Valley Rail Trail Coordination:** The long-awaited completion of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail brought unique planning and economic opportunities to the host communities along the 93-mile route. NVDA regularly participated in a broader planning effort with regional planning partners in Lamoille and Franklin Counties to coordinate planning and development resources to our LVRT host communities. NVDA staff also organized and continue to facilitate the NEK+ Regional LVRT Council which includes representatives from each of our LVRT towns as well as at-large members from trail user groups. Through the Council NVDA facilitated the development of the [Lamoille Valley Rail Trail User Projections and Economic Impact Analysis in Caledonia County](#) and was awarded a \$64,000 VTrans LVRT Community Grant to fund the development of an LVRT Regional Amenities Scoping Study.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As the regional planning commission and the region's economic development corporation, NVDA has been able to leverage the invaluable lessons learned during the pandemic recovery and refine innovative development practices. Many of our endeavors involve ongoing partnerships with state and regional organizations, ensuring that local businesses access the support and assistance they need to grow and remain competitive.

- **Brownfields:** NVDA neared the completion of implementation work of its 2020 EPA Brownfield Assessment grant. Funds were used to assist with local redevelopment efforts in several communities. Over the 2018 and 2020 grant periods, NVDA has advanced the redevelopment of 23 properties in the region. During FY23, NVDA learned that its applications for \$1M in new Assessment funds and \$1M in Revolving Loan funds were successful.
- **Technical Assistance and Grants:** NVDA helped two businesses apply for Regional Economic Development Grants - Whiteout Solutions and the Topsy Hop Farm. This program, administered by the Vermont Department of Buildings and General Services, provides competitive grants to municipalities and to nonprofit organizations to cover capital costs associated with maintenance, renovation, or equipment purchases related to the development of facilities expected to create or retain job opportunities. Additionally, NVDA's work under its USDA Rural Development Business Grant continued. To date, we have provided \$99,000 in cost sharing for technical assistance to 15 local businesses.

- **Regional Priorities:** In FY2023 NVDA compiled and updated its Regional Priority Projects List. This list is developed by Regional Development Corporations to identify community and economic development projects of regional importance that may be in need of grant funding to advance. Input for the list comes from municipalities and regional partners.
- **NVEDD Web site:** NVDA's region is part of the 115 municipalities of the Northern Vermont Economic Development District (NVEDD), which consists of Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille, and Orleans Counties. The district maintains an approved Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy approved by the Economic Development Administration. In FY2023 worked on a user-friendly redesign of the NVEED web site, which features an NVEDD Grant & Funding Database and online Funding Opportunities Search Tool: <https://nvedd.org/>
- **Small Business Growth and Development:** NVDA supported Do North Coworking to facilitate the second annual KickstartNEK, a 10-week program that uses the nationally recognized Co.Starters curriculum to guide emerging ideas and small businesses through a process to build a sustainable and profitable entity. We also supported and sponsored the second annual Forest Products Accelerator. A program of Vermont State University and Do North Coworking, the accelerator is a competitively selected four-month program for North American startup and seed stage companies: <https://forestaccelerator.org/>

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Regional Planning Commissions coordinate the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI) through a contract with VTrans. This effort has provided a statewide framework for public involvement in planning improvements to Vermont's transportation system, with communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the state's transportation system.

The regional planning commissions serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state, and federal transportation network advancement. This year, NVDA staff assisted numerous municipalities with Grants in Aid projects. We also conducted traffic counts, speed counts, and bike/pedestrian counts. We also supported our municipalities with Municipal Roads General Permit reporting and compliance and conducted a training for local road foremen on the new VT Culverts app. NVDA serves on the board of directors for Rural Community Transportation (RCT), the nonprofit transit organization serving the Northeast Kingdom and Lamoille County. We also co-facilitate RCT's Elders and Persons with Disabilities committee with the Lamoille County Regional Planning Commission.

Here are our accomplishments this year, as they relate to the Transportation Planning Initiative:

Objective 1: Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions and Municipalities

- 3 TAC meetings held
- 2 non-municipal TAC members actively engaged in transportation planning
- 45 municipalities actively engaged in transportation planning
- 12 RPC coordination activities with municipalities and VTrans

Objective 2: Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning

- Regional transportation plan that is current (within 8 years) – note our plan was updated and readopted this year. A new plan is in development.
- 1 Act 250 applications with RPC comments relating to transportation
- 0 Section 248 applications with RPC comments relating to transportation
- 4 coordination activities in support of regional public transit providers
- 2 VTrans committees that involves RPC staff participation
- Region participates in Project Prioritization

Objective 3: Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities

- 40 municipalities participating in road foreman meetings annually
- 9 municipalities assisted with transportation related grants
- 50% of budget spent on municipal technical assistance
- 2 municipal transportation inventories conducted
- 6 municipal transportation related feasibility/project definition studies completed or undertaken
- 10 municipalities assisted with transportation element of municipal/town plan
- 5 road erosion inventories in support of the MRGP completed using TPI dollars and using other funding sources

Objective 4: Deliver Results that Advance VTrans Strategic and Long Range Transportation Plans

- 37 data collection activities conducted specifically for VTrans

Objective 5: Provide a Mechanism for Improved Public Outreach and Education

NVDA facilitates a regional Rivers and Roads Working group made up of DEC Staff, County Conservation District Managers, VTrans Maintenance District Staff, and other regional partners. We continue to assist municipalities with various aspects of stormwater mitigation related to town highways and private landowner access issues related to stormwater.

EMERGENCY PLANNING & RESPONSE

The regional planning commission plays a key role in emergency management through its work with Vermont Emergency Management, Vermont Homeland Security, Vermont Agency of Transportation, and the Agency of Natural Resources. We focus primarily on mitigation and preparedness, so we work with each community to identify vulnerabilities and actions to eliminate or lessen the risk. NVDA staff work with member communities to write and update flood hazard regulations, prepare FEMA-approved Local Hazard Mitigation Plans, and coordinate updates to local plans. We also assist during response and recovery in larger scale-events, such as federally declared disasters.

Many of our efforts in FY23 helped to ensure that our communities qualified for level or even extra funding under the Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund this July. With significant flood damage to roads and bridges, the extra 5% or even 10% to pay for damaged public infrastructure proved to be a powerful incentive for our communities.

- **Local Emergency Management Plans (LEMP):** Every community is required to have a LEMP, which gets updated annually, typically after Town Meeting Day. Also known as the "pocket plan", the LEMP is a portable, efficient guide for use in the early stages of disaster response. IN FY2023, NVDA staff assisted all municipalities in our region with the LEMP update and adoption process, and all but two have already adopted them.
- **Local Hazard Mitigation Plans:** These five-year plans identify predominant risks to a community and identify ways to lessen their impacts. They are required for any community seeking FEMA hazard mitigation funds. This year, NVDA helped the following municipalities with the preparation of Local Hazard Mitigation Plans: Maidstone, Danville, and Westfield. The Maidstone Plan has already been approved for adoption.
- **Special Training and Planning Exercises:** NVDA staff continue to participate in special planning exercises such as the Great Bay Hydro Corp. Dam Emergency Action Seminar, which is held annually in December. NVDA staff participated in the Training, Exercise, and Planning Workshop, the Stakeholder Preparedness Review, the Integrated Preparedness Plan Exercise, and the annual Vermont Emergency Preparedness Conference. NVDA staff also participate in the monthly VEM/RPC conference calls. NVDA staff made municipal officials aware of any training that was available which could assist them in their positions, such as the Vermont Emergency Preparedness Conference held in Killington in September, 2022. NVDA staff has made municipal officials aware of the Vermont Emergency Preparedness Conference that will be held at the Burke Resort, which is located in NVDA's region in September, 2023.
- **Regional Emergency Management Committee (REMC):** NVDA staff took the lead role in organizing two Regional Emergency Management Committees, which replaced the Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPC) in 2021. The former LEPC 9 which consisted of all of Caledonia County and lower Essex County is now known as Cal-Essex REMC and the former LEPC 10 which consisted of all of Orleans County and upper Essex County is now known as Orleans-Essex REMC. There have been three meetings with each of these REMCs in the past year, and a set of by-laws have been established. There will be two more meetings in 2023 with each REMC, in September and November.
- **July 2023 Flood Response:** NVDA staff had to pivot and realign resources due to the unprecedented damage from flooding. NVDA staff assisted at the State Emergency Operations Center during this time, and the local liaisons from NVDA promptly reached out to all the communities in Caledonia, Essex, and Orleans County to get damage reports to Vermont Emergency Management in a timely manner. NVDA staff met with FEMA and SBA officials in Hardwick, Sheffield, Barton, Orleans, Glover, and Greensboro to look at homes and businesses that were damaged. Two communities – Hardwick and Greensboro – experienced significant losses to roads and bridges. NVDA provided consulting funds and staff to restore level funding under ERAF, saving taxpayers tens of thousands of dollars. NVDA staff also visited every community to assist with damage assessments. We also added a Flood Resource page to our web site and expanded our newsletter to include recovery resources. Finally, NVDA made themselves available to assist reviewing Vermont Community Foundation grant applications from farmers who have experienced crop losses during the July storms and flooding.

MAPPING

GIS mapping is an integral component of NVDA technical service offerings in planning and economic development. Our mapping supports planners and community development initiatives by providing geographical and spatial analysis.

- **Village Center and Downtown Designations:** Our mapping is essential for proposed and existing designations. We use a format acceptable to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, so our municipalities can readily apply to the program. In FY2023, our GIS Specialist worked with the town of St Johnsbury to define a boundary for a Neighborhood Development Area, the area was approved by ACCD. NVDA also mapped the boundaries for Hardwick's Downtown Designation, which was also approved by ACCD.
- **Planning and Regulatory Mapping:** We continue to provide maps for town plans to depict land use, development patterns, and constraints to development. We also provided zoning bylaw district maps. Our zoning formats include wall-sized and ledger-sized (for easy download and remote printing.) In FY2023 we prepared plan maps for the Towns of Brownington, Barnet and Craftsbury. We also provided updated base maps for Maidstone, Groton, and Peacham. We reprinted zoning maps with updated base information for the towns of Groton, Danville and Lyndon.
- **Special Projects:** In FY2023, we produced several site maps supporting projects in Jay, Ryegate, Danville, St Johnsbury, Peacham, Derby, Craftsbury, and Danville.

ENERGY PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION

NVDA continues to make progress updating its regional energy plan to support the overarching goals of the Vermont Climate Action Plan, Comprehensive Energy Plan, and new Environmental Justice Law. We continue to focus on putting our energy plan – and local plans -- into action, with a heightened concern for reducing energy burden and internalizing energy justice principles. Energy burden, which is measured as a percentage of household income spent on energy, is particularly high in the Northeast Kingdom. This is a concern for the NEK because when a disproportionate amount of income is spent on energy, it can lead to energy poverty and lasting health and economic hardships. Therefore, concerted efforts must take place to reduce energy burden in the NEK and statewide. To ensure that our energy use transformations are equitable and affordable, we maintain ongoing dialogue with our valued partners: Efficiency Vermont, utilities companies in the NEK, as well as critical weatherization resources, such as HEAT Squad, Northeast Employment and Training Organization, Northeast Kingdom Community Action, and Capstone. We also hold regular meetings with energy planners in other regional planning commissions. We have been working closely with our communities during the roll-out of the Vermont Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP), with a special focus on our 32 most energy burdened towns first, to enable free municipal building energy assessments and grant funds for implementation.

- **Regional NEK Energy Network Meetings:** These quarterly online convenings for best-practice sharing, networking and collaboration are well attended by local energy committees and energy partners. Meetings regularly feature a focused presentation by NVDA or one of our

valued partner organizations, including the Department of Public Service, Distribution Utilities, Vermont Climate Office, and Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD). In FY2023, these informative meetings drew an average of 28 participants from eleven communities.

- **NVDA Energy Update newsletter:** Our popular online newsletter about energy incentives, programming, webinars, and special events continues to go out monthly. Our readership increased, and our newsletters now have an average open rate of over 50%.
- **Policy and Consultation:** In FY23, NVDA staff provided feedback to the Department of Public Service on Vermont’s renewable energy policies and programs, as well as feedback to Efficiency Vermont for their policies and programming and energy burden report. NVDA continues to collaborate with the Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network regarding their annual event and ongoing community energy engagement opportunities. We also promoted VCRD’s Climate Catalyst program and saw several of our communities awarded for innovative initiatives, such as the Craftsbury Library’s solar + storage project and Glover’s electric-bike program. NVDA became a member of ICLEI-Local Governments of Sustainability in FY2023.
- **In-Person Events:** In the fall of 2022, NVDA staff worked with local energy committees and partners on several energizing in-person events. These include the popular, annual Danville Electric Transportation Parade & Fair, as well as our second year partnering with the annual Button Up campaign to host an “NEK Weatherization for All” event. NVDA convened a panel of energy experts and event partners that included: Efficiency Vermont, HEAT Squad, NETO, USDA, Rural Edge, Utilities (VEC & VPPSA), and NEKCA Green Saving Smart. Over 65 people attended this event at the scenic Old Stone House Museum in Orleans County and took away resources and opportunities for making weatherization affordable and accessible to all. NVDA staff also promoted and participated in Window Dressers community builds hosted by multiple NEK communities, which helped to build over 1,000 affordable, insulated window inserts for homes across the region.
- **Health Equity and Resilience Planning:** NVDA collaborated with the Department of Health on both the Health Equity Toolkit and the Hot Weather Emergency Toolkit, combining efforts to reach communities at the nexus of emergency management, health equity, and climate resilience and preparedness.
- **Community Solar Development:** The Town of Peacham, bolstered by its adopted enhanced energy plan, launched its plans for a 150 kW array on a preferred site. The Peacham Community Solar array was energized in 2023 and provides benefits to the Town of Peacham (saving taxpayer dollars), as well as participating homes, businesses, and farms nearby. NVDA proudly lent its support to this project and will co-host an NEK Solarbration at the site of the solar array in the fall, in partnership with the Peacham Energy Committee and the Public Service Department, among others.
- **Enhanced energy plans:** Our local energy planning continued in FY2023, as staff helped finalize energy plans for Danville, Newark, Barnet, and draft siting standards for Ryegate. We currently have 15 municipalities with energy plans certified to receive “substantial deference”

in the Section 248 review process, and we look forward to supporting additional communities in the coming year.

CLEAN WATER

Nonpoint source pollution, such as phosphorous loading, remains a key concern throughout the state. NVDA's watershed planner engages in partnerships with state agencies, municipalities, and various public and private organizations to achieve holistic solutions. It's all tall order because our region encompasses seven basin planning areas. Two of these basins -- the Passumpsic and the Memphremagog -- are completely contained in our region, so we do not share planning responsibilities with other regional planning commissions.

- **Tactical Basin Planning:** NVDA's Water Quality Planner is responsible for reviewing Tactical Basin Plans for conformance with NVDA's Regional Plan. These plans are important because they identify impaired areas, as well as corrective measures to restore water quality. The plans are also useful to local planning commissions as they provide insight into water quality. In FY2023, NVDA's Water Quality Planner was involved in the development of the Memphremagog Tactical Basin Plan, as well as a conformance review of the plans in relation to the NEK Regional Plan. We are currently engaged in assisting basin planners with updates to the Passumpsic Basin 15 Tactical Basin Plan.
- **Flood Resilience:** Managing development in areas prone to flooding is an important part of our water quality outreach and municipal adoption of River Corridor Protection (RCP) bylaws has been supported in the past. The Town of Derby adopted RCP bylaws, and a group of NVDA and VTDEC personnel provided the City of Newport with a presentation regarding the benefit of RCP bylaws as well as potential issues with the upcoming FEMA map updates. Additionally, a regional Municipal Information Workshop regarding what to expect with the upcoming FEMA map updates was well attended. This municipal outreach and assistance work will continue to be a key area of interaction with our municipalities.
- **Basin Water Quality Councils:** As the Vermont Clean Water Act (Act 76) is moving into statewide promulgation, the important work of coordinating with the newly formed Basin Water Quality Councils (BWQC) is also being performed. Our Water Quality Planner has been appointed to the Missisquoi Basin BWQC and has accepted the chair position to the Memphremagog BWQC for the second year in a row. The work of these councils is to provide funding approval for non-regulatory projects in basins where a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) has been established.
- **Regional Alliances:** Having a regional presence with the goal of returning crucial information back to the NEK is also accomplished by the Water Quality Planner being involved with the Quebec-Vermont Steering Committee for Lake Memphremagog, the Connecticut River Joint Commission (CRJC), a state-wide Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) group, and the Orleans County Cooperative Invasive Species Management Association (CISMA).
- **Invasive Species:** Both terrestrial and aquatic invasive species are becoming more problematic in our region. Our Water Quality Planner has been involved with discussions regarding the prevention and management of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) in our regional

waterbodies. We've weighed in on the threat of AIS dissemination through wakeboat ballasts in relation to the proposed rule as well as supported the recent budget line-item addition for yearly AIS funding. A module for training of roads crews to recognize and potentially address terrestrial invasive species has also been developed and will be presented in the next fiscal year.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

NVDA's uniquely dual role as Regional Planning Commission and Economic Development Corporation allows us to take on unusual and challenging endeavors.

- **Northeast Kingdom Development Corporation:** NVDA's Director continues to serve on the board of this private non-profit 501(c)(3), which serves as a catalyst for local economic development projects requiring public-private partnerships. As the fiscal agent for the Hardwick Yellow Barn project, NEKDC has been the primary entity to secure bridge financing as well as a New Market Tax Credit allocation. The NEKDC also worked with the City of Newport to acquire and renovate a vacant 47,000 sf manufacturing facility that was part of a failed EB-5 project. Once completed, the facility will be leased to a local manufacturer of snow groomers, which plans to work with other companies to develop, manufacture, and service smart off-road electric vehicles and batteries. The partnership will create well-paying new jobs in the area in the coming years.
- **Hardwick Yellow Barn Business Accelerator:** After three years of delay from pandemic supply chain disruption and inflation, the Hardwick Yellow Barn broke ground! In FY23, NVDA staff worked hard on a successful closing on \$11.4 MM in New Markets Tax Credits financing. Despite its challenges, the project serves as a model for public-private partnerships to take on challenging economic development projects. The Town of Hardwick, recipient of the bulk of grant funds, teamed up with the NEKDC as the leverage lender for the financing. Neither entity could have accomplished this separately. The project is expected to be substantially complete in December 2024.
- **ARPA Outreach:** As we navigate in the post pandemic emergency recovery, NVDA's role as liaison with municipal officials, local committees, and state and regional entities has proved invaluable. In FY2023, NVDA staff continued to provide local support and information on ARPA funding throughout our entire region.
- **InnovateNEK:** NVDA staff worked with Do North Coworking and the Center on Rural Innovation (CORI) to develop InnovateNEK, a program designed to increase local wealth by creating new tech jobs incubating and accelerating tech startups. NVDA submitted 1.5M EDA Build to Scale Venture Challenge proposal to fund the InnovateNEK program in August of 2023.

ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING

NVDA's revenues come from a myriad of sources, including a share of the state's property transfer funds; private, state, and federal grants; and annual appropriations from our member communities. We also receive rental income from our multi-tenant building in the St. Johnsbury-Lyndon Industrial

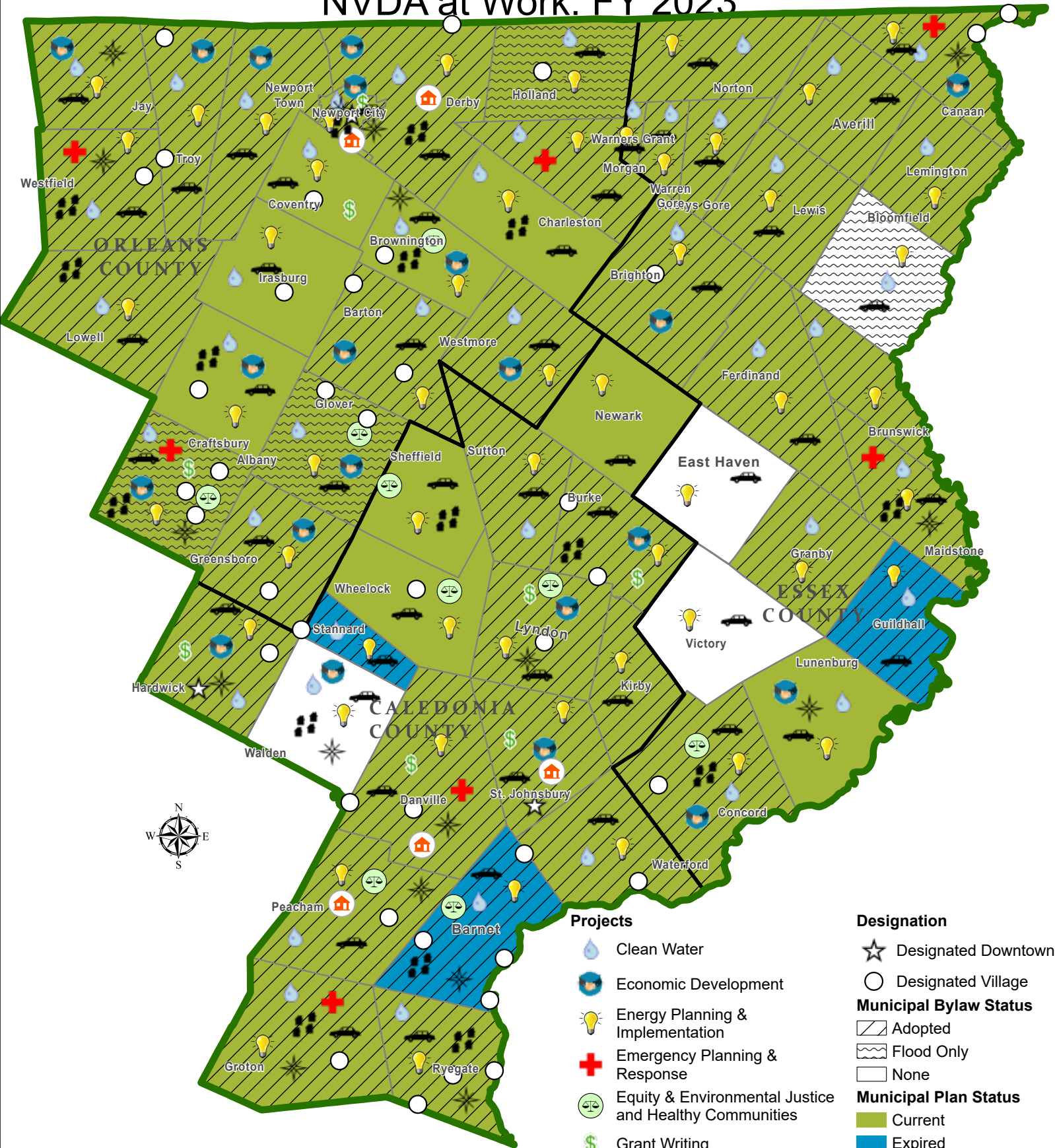
Park, as well as income from contracted services from municipalities, including municipal plan and bylaw development funded by Municipal Planning Grants.

- **Community Development and Relending:** NVDA is an approved Non-Profit Community Development Organization, which allows us to operate a revolving loan fund recapitalized by loan repayments from previous economic development projects. In the previous fiscal year, NVDA made a loan to the Craftsbury Community Care Center for their important HVAC retrofits. NVDA did receive notice of an EPA Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund award and will be able to assist with cleanups in FY2024.
- **Audits:** As with previous years, NVDA's most recent audit (FY2022) produced no findings. Our FY2023 audit will be made available at the end of the calendar year.
- **Timely news and communications:** NVDA continued the publication and distribution of its regular e-newsletters with a circulation of about 1,400. In FY2023, NVDA's e-newsletter was distributed monthly to keep readers informed of opportunities for community and economic development. We also maintain a web site (www.nvda.net) as a resource for reliable and detailed information on each of our member municipalities. Every effort is made to keep it up to date so that users can access and download current plans, bylaws, maps, data, and other important information for our readers.

'AT WORK' MAP

The map depicting the range of services provided by the NVDA to member municipalities is included on the next page.

NVDA at Work: FY 2023



Projects

- Clean Water
- Economic Development
- Energy Planning & Implementation
- Emergency Planning & Response
- Equity & Environmental Justice and Healthy Communities
- Grant Writing
- Housing
- Mapping
- Planning and Zoning
- Transportation Planning (including Bridge/Culvert Inventory, REI & Traffic Counts)

Designation

- ☆ Designated Downtown
 - Designated Village
- Municipal Bylaw Status**
- Adopted
 - Flood Only
 - None
- Municipal Plan Status**
- Current
 - Expired
 - No Town Plan
- County Boundary**

Rutland Regional Planning Commission

FY 2023 Annual Report

The Rutland Regional Planning Commission (RRPC) represents the 27 municipalities of the Rutland Region in Southwest Vermont. Created in 1967, the RRPC leverages the power of people working together to assist municipalities provide effective local government services and to work cooperatively to address regional issues. The RRPC primary goals are to advocate for the needs of our member towns, and to articulate a vision for building a thriving and sustainable regional economy while enhancing the region's quality of life. RRPC staff provide technical services to local, state and federal levels of government and to the Region's non-profits, organizations and businesses.

PLANNING & ZONING

RPCs coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a regional plan. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors.

- The RRPC initiated an overhaul of the 2018 Regional Plan with an expected completion date of August 2026. The redesigned and reimagined plan will synthesize the priorities of all 27 towns in the Rutland Region through a robust public engagement effort. The plan will have a new vision for the future through clear goals, policies, and action items which support the ultimate theme of the plan, "what makes a place great?".
- The RRPC contract with the Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA) to conduct a Rutland Regional Housing Needs Assessment to help guide regional planning, provide data for the regional plan, and support housing development and redevelopment throughout the Region.
- The RRPC used the Regional Plan to evaluate applications and participate in the Act 250 and Section 248 projects. The RRPC Regional Committee reviewed five (5) Act 250 projects and twelve (12) Section 248 projects for conformance with the Regional Plan.
- The 2018 Rutland Regional Plan articulates a vision for the Rutland region: economic, social, and environmental resilience; incremental and long-term growth; urban design; and walkable, connected communities. The RRPC continues to provide the tools and information towns need to make smart decisions and also provides space for people to learn, share, and come together around topics that impact the Rutland Region.

RPCs act as a cost-effective professional planning staff for many of Vermont's municipalities. Work in recent years has focused on improving town plans, local permitting through education and consultations, bylaw modernization, economic development planning, and grant administration. This work is supported through local and regional planning funds, local contributions and other funding sources. Highlights include:

- Provided technical assistance to twenty (20) planning commissions.
- Assisted with town plan updates for the towns of Brandon, Killington, Tinmouth, Hubbardton, Castleton, Chittenden, and Shrewsbury.

- Assisted with zoning bylaw modernization for the towns of Brandon, Fair Haven, Poultney, Pawlet, Killington, Rutland City and West Rutland.
- Assisted with municipal planning grant funded master planning projects in the towns of Chittenden, Pawlet, and Mount Holly.
- Assisted with village center and downtown designation renewals for Poultney, East Poultney, Benson, Danby, Proctor, and Rutland City. The RRPC also assisted Wells with an application to establish a new village center designation.
- Provided guidance and technical assistance to Administrative Officers implementing local land use bylaws and held zoning administrator roundtables.
- Worked with towns of Mount Holly, Shrewsbury, and West Rutland on flood hazard area bylaw development.
- Hosted a municipal training and roundtable on Open Meeting Law with the Vermont Secretary of State.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with solid land use planning principals. RPCs work with towns and other organizations to this end in a number of ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont for long-term economic growth.

- Continued participation in the West-Central Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy with the RRPC Board of Commissioners formally adopting the West Central VT CEDS.
- Continued work to redevelop the Rutland Workforce Investment Board and completed a strategic plan and regional service provider map funded by the Vermont Community Foundation.
- Initiated Phase 2 of the Rutland Regional Asset Mapping Project (RAMP) through a Municipal Planning Grant and the Town of Brandon.
- Worked with Vermont Department of Health and RPCs to create the Vermont Health Equity Planning Toolkit.
- Supported several organizations and businesses with applications to the Community Recovery and Revitalization Program.
- Provided technical assistance to the City of Rutland for the development of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district and to the Town of Killington for TIF implementation.
- Worked with the City of Rutland, Community and Economic Development of the Rutland Region, housing groups, and local developers to create a housing working group.

EMERGENCY PLANNING & RESPONSE

RPCs play key roles in all phases of Emergency Management – preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. RPCs partner with state and regional agencies on measures such as trainings, plans,

and exercises to help communities prepare in advance of an incident to ensure effective response. During an incident, we provide direct staff support to the State Emergency Operations Center and coordinate the timely collection of local damage information. Prior to the next disaster, RPCs provide municipalities with the technical assistance needed to complete mitigation priorities to make them more disaster resilient, and assist as needed, in special circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic and other declared disasters. Highlights include:

- Maintained the structure and operations of the Rutland Regional Emergency Management Committee (REMC), which exists to coordinate emergency planning and preparedness activities. This included soliciting the reappointment of voting members for FY23; reviewing and amending the committee bylaws; coordinating and supporting four (4) quarterly meetings; reviewing and amending the Regional Plan outlining regional coordination procedures and available resources to support local response efforts. REMC also kicked off our “Binary Blizzard Build-up” (B³) concept, in which RRPC provides support for numerous capacity-building activities for meaningful municipal participation in the October 2024 statewide exercise known as “Binary Blizzard.”
- Assisted individual municipalities with a range of planning efforts – Local Emergency Management Plans, Hazard Mitigation Plans, Continuity of Operations Plans, and Incident Specific Action Plans, including newly developed Hot Weather Response plans for Wallingford and Middletown Springs.
- Worked with municipalities to maximize their State Emergency Relief Assistance Fund rating, including enrollment in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). RRPC supported the adoption of flood hazard regulations in Tinmouth and their successful enrollment in NFIP.
- Coordinated two tabletop exercises. One focused on a dam-related incident at the Chittenden Reservoir and exercised the participants’ knowledge, skills, and abilities to effectively conduct an emergency response. The other focused on validating the newly developed and adopted Hot Weather Response plans for Wallingford and Middletown Springs, exercising operational coordination, public information and warning, and sheltering and mass care capabilities.
- Reviewed and revised the Rutland Region Vulnerable Populations Communication Protocol with local municipal emergency management officials and regional social service agencies after its apparent failure during the December 2022 storm. The Protocol was successfully drilled in May 2023 and successfully activated and executed in July 2023.
- Hosted several meetings and trainings to strengthen local capacity in the areas of: shelter activation and management, sheltering for pets, and planning and recovery activities for dam-related incidents.
- Participated in meetings of the Rutland Regional Medical Center, Rutland Southern Vermont Regional Airport, and Slate Valley Unified School District safety teams.
- Two RRPC staff completed training to serve in the State Emergency Operations Center.
- Worked with Brandon, Danby, Mount Tabor, Killington, Mendon, and Castleton to update their Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- Served on the State Hazard Mitigation Grant Application Review Committee.
- Supported extensive flood response and recovery activities for July 2023’s severe storms and flooding events (DR-4720-VT). This includes but is not limited to; disseminating situation updates and press releases from the Governor, Vermont Emergency Management, and

other State agencies; fielding phone calls and emails containing requests and inquiries from municipal officials; collecting and submitting multiple rounds of Local Liaison damage reports from Rutland Region municipalities; serving in the State Emergency Operations Center; and disseminating information related to FEMA's Public and Individual Assistance Programs, Substantial Damage Estimation trainings, and emerging loan programs for small businesses and other entities.

ENERGY PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION

A continued focus on clean, renewable, sustainable, and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunity and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation and natural resources efforts, and work with municipalities to assist with project implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process. Over the last year, significant projects included:

- The ongoing roll-out of the Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP), a new grant program by Vermont Building and General Services (BGS) and administered by regional planning commissions to help communities across the State become more energy resilient. This effort includes but is not limited to; developing and executing an outreach and communications plan; conducting an initial survey to collect information about municipal buildings in need of fuel switching and other energy enhancement efforts, in order to help towns identify and prioritize potentially eligible buildings; creating and distributing informational brochures and flyers for each phase of the program; delivering a presentation to the RRPC Board of Commissioners about the purpose and requirements of MERP; assisting municipalities with the completion of the community capacity grant (or "mini-grant") and/or energy assessment applications; providing support and follow-up for mini-grant agreement procedures; and convening with other RPC energy planners and BGS to coordinate program roll-out.
- Assisted Rutland City with pre-award requirements for its Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) funding from the Department of Energy.
- Reached out to the 12 Rutland Region communities with local energy groups to give them the resources needed to implement renewable energy development and energy conservation goals. Also assisted municipal and local energy committee efforts and used RRPC social media to promote specific thermal and electrical energy efficiency initiatives with Efficiency Vermont, NeighborWorks Heat Squad, BROOC, and Green Mountain Power.
- For the seven municipalities that have adopted enhanced energy plans, conducted outreach to implement actions identified in their plans.
- Along with several other regional planning commissions, RRPC assisted the Department of Public Service with its update of its Act 174 enhanced energy planning standards, mapping, and LEAP modeling for regional and municipal energy plans.

CLEAN WATER

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to assist with completion of the EPA required watershed plans and tactical basin plans and related projects:

- As the designated Clean Water Service Provider (CWSP) for the South Lake Champlain Watershed, RRPC worked with our partner, the Poultney Mettowee Natural Resources Conservation District (PMNRCD), to complete the start-up phase for CWSP and move into annual CWSP funding and responsibilities. Thirteen subgrantees and subcontractors for CWSP funding were pre-qualified, our Basin Water Quality Council (BWQC), a group of stakeholders, met to develop an application for soliciting potential projects and a system for scoring proposed projects, and began the process of soliciting projects. A first round of requesting projects was released resulting in two projects being funded. Staff also worked with VDEC on remaining CWSP Guidance and new reporting and financial requirements.
- Worked with Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC), which was designated the CWSP for the Otter Creek Watershed, by being a member of its BWQC and providing input on projects proposed in that basin (which includes part of the Rutland Region).
- Worked with Mount Holly and a VDEC floodplain manager to adopt river corridor mapping and protections in its Flood Hazard and River Corridor Bylaw.
- Worked with Shrewsbury and a VDEC floodplain manager to adopt river corridor mapping and protections in its Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor Regulations.
- Worked with VDEC to complete the petition to successfully reclassify Ward Marsh in West Haven to a Class 1 wetland, the highest classification of wetland protection.
- Worked with Tinmouth to generate participation in VDEC's Lake Wise Program and assessments at Chipman Lake.
- Worked with Benson and Mount Ascutney Regional Commission to begin the application process for a Clean Water Design Implementation Block Grant for water quality and road erosion issues at Sunset Lake.
- Worked with a VDEC Watershed Coordinator to track progress on implemented strategies in the Tactical Basin Plans for the Otter Creek and South Lake Champlain basins.
- Under an EPA/VDEC 604b grant, updated the State's Watershed Projects Database of Clean Water Act projects with stormwater and water quality assessments in the Otter Creek and South Lake Champlain Tactical Basin Plans.

BROWNFIELDS

The Rutland Region Brownfields Program (BRP) has existed for 18 years and received approximately \$3 million in funding from the US EPA to conduct community-wide assessment activities and redevelopment planning. Funding for this work has been reinvested in the Region and leveraged other funding sources, making the program an essential land use and economic development tool for municipalities. Highlights include:

- Coordinated assessment and redevelopment work in five (5) towns, Rutland City, Rutland Town, Pittsford, Pawlet, and West Rutland. including municipally owned sites such as the former Dutchie's store in West Pawlet.
- Performed assessment and redevelopment planning work at the Vermont Farmers Food Center in Rutland City. The site is a potential regional economic engine, which hosts the largest winters farmers market in the state.

- Continued work on a remediation and redevelopment plan for the former Berwick Hotel site in Downtown Rutland. The site is planned for development into a multi-story, mixed-use development in the heart of Rutland.
- Performed assessment work at the former Lynda Lee Fashions manufacturing facility in Rutland City, which is setting the stage for a redevelopment of the historic building. The redevelopment of this site is a focus of the Rutland City TIF District.
- Performed assessment and planning work for the former Dutchies Store, a municipally owned site in Pawlet.
- Performed assessment and planning work for a Housing Trust of Rutland County project in West Rutland and a community and daycare center in Pittsford.
- Secured \$400,000 in assessment funds from the EPA Brownfields Program.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Through a contract with VTrans, RPCs coordinate the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort has provided a statewide framework for public involvement in planning the improvements to Vermont's transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the state's transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state, and federal transportation network advancement.

The RRPC remains focused on working with its municipalities to establish effective multimodal networks, which will serve as a pillar for the development of strong villages and downtown centers, increasing the economic viability of the region at large.

Objective #1: Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions and Municipalities

- Held 9 Rutland Region Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings.
- Worked with 25 municipalities in the Rutland Region actively engaged in regional and municipal transportation planning.
- Coordinated 4 activities with municipalities and VTrans.

Objective #2: Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning

- Serving as a Chair and Board Member of the Marble Valley Regional Transit District Board of Commissioners and as project manager for Rutland City Fixed-Route Analysis.
- Held ten (10) meetings of regional E&D Public Transit Advisory Committee.
- Worked with VTrans and Town of Poultney on Better Connections – Town to Trails Project.
- Participated in VTrans Bicycle and Pedestrian Grant Program Selection Committee.
- Provided comments on 2 Act 250 applications related to transportation.
- Coordinated 3 activities in support of Regional Public Transit Providers (E&D, Bus Board, Route Analysis).
- Participated in BPIPP Steering Committee and Bike Ped Grant Review with VTrans.

Objective #3: Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities

- Held two Road Foreman Meetings.
- Assisted Castleton, Rutland City, and Rutland Town with planning and preparation for large-scale Bicycle and Pedestrian Grants.
- Assisted Pittsford, Proctor, West Rutland, Brandon and Castleton with planning and preparation for Transportation Alternatives Grants.
- Developed and wrote application for Rutland City Better Connections Grant.
- Assisted Killington and Mount Holly with transportation chapter of town plan.
- Worked on 4 transportation related feasibility projects.
- Provided technical assistance for Safe Routes to School Grant, Better Roads, HSIP Small Scale and AARP Community Challenge Grant.
- Provided municipal project management services to Pawlet, Castleton, Poultney, Rutland City, West Rutland, Tinmouth, Fair Haven, Wallingford, Mendon, and Killington.
- Provided MRGP compliance assistance for all 27 Towns – training on permit requirements, how to use web-based and mobile app tools to manage road erosion inventories, developing work plans for construction projects funded through the Grants in Aid Program, and purchasing equipment to improve road segments through the Grants in Aid Equipment Program.

Objective #4: Deliver Results that Advance VTrans Strategic and Long-Range Transportation Plans

- Conducted 28 data collection activities for VTrans. (Traffic Counts, Bike Ped Counts, Park and Ride Counts, Sidewalk Inventories, Culvert Inventories).

Objective #5: Provide a Mechanism for Improved Public Outreach and Education

- Held Road Foreman Training for the new Road Erosion Inventory Tool and several one-on-one field training sessions for Towns.
- Set up table in transit center with donuts and coffee to solicit feedback from riders to inform route analysis. RRPC was concerned that the consultant's planned outreach method (digital surveys and QR codes) would exclude some of the riders they were hoping to reach who lacked access to smart phones or laptops.
- Created museum exhibit on how transportation and land use policies over time have changed development patterns, which explained current state level planning goals of compact centers and multi-modal infrastructure.
- Worked to lay the groundwork for a D&H Rail Trail Council ahead of Task 8 funding in FFY24.

MAPPING

In addition to enhancing the RPC work, RPCs provide municipalities, state agencies, and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of their projects.

- **Town and Regional Planning** – Worked with the towns of Castleton, Fair Haven, Hubbardton, Killington, Mount Holly, Poultney, Proctor, Rutland Town, Tinmouth, and West Rutland to create and/or update municipal plan and zoning maps and to provide technical GIS support. Worked on Village Center Designation mapping for Wells and East Poultney. Continued work on flood hazard mapping and inventories and grant related maps.
- **Bridge and Culvert Inventories** – RRPC GIS staff worked with six town road departments to collect culvert data using the commission's ArcGIS Online Field Map app and then completed the

inventory, mapping, and updates to VT Culverts for: Hubbardton, Ira, Mount Holly, Pawlet, and Wells. Continued to refine our detailed regional assessment plan for culvert inventories, based on a five-year cycle.

Transportation Mapping – Provided mapping support for several transportation related town projects and grant applications for the towns of Castleton, Rutland Town, Poultney, Pittsford, and Rutland City. Created Sidewalk Inventory Survey Tool for the Rutland Region and mapping sidewalks for Rutland City, Rutland Town, Brandon, Pittsford, Wallingford, Castleton, Fair Haven, and Poultney. Added and updated bridge and culvert inventories, as well as assessments and traffic and pedestrian counts for many towns in the region. Developed inventory of Rutland City Street Trees within roadway ROW.

- **Emergency Management** – In support of ongoing emergency management planning, RRPC GIS staff created potential Local Hazard Vulnerability maps for several towns in support of their Local Hazard Management Plan.
- **Resiliency Support** – Provided several towns with maps of their special flood hazard areas and river corridors and maps for site specific flood hazards.
- **Energy Plans** – Continued to work on energy maps for several towns in the region. Provided detailed maps and acreage assessments of potential renewable energy sites.

ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING

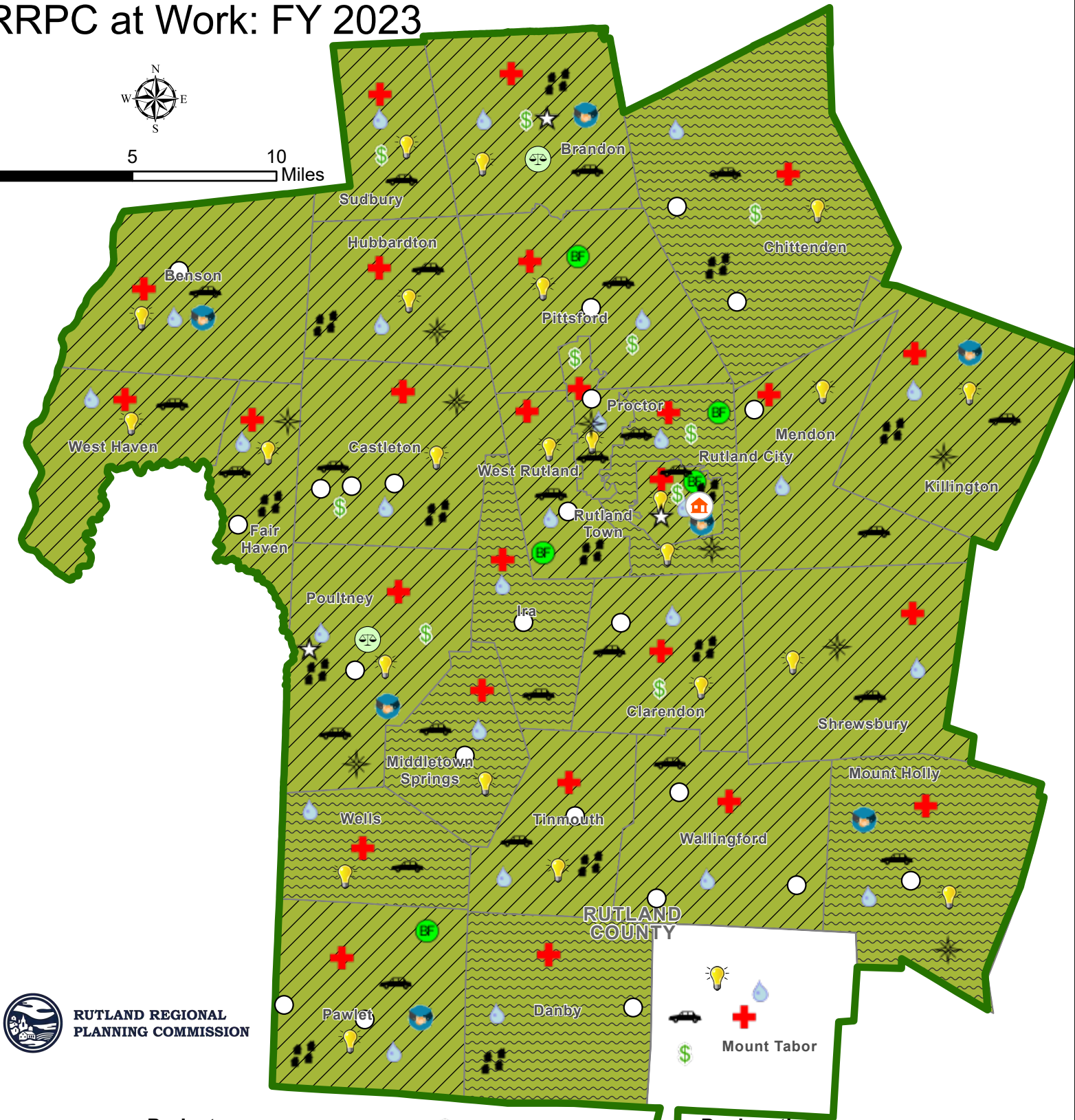
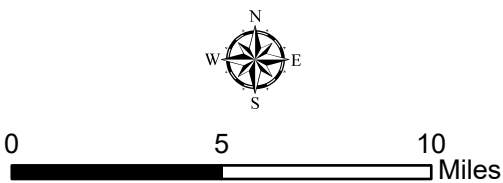
Administration of the RRPC's programs, policies, and finances continue to be managed effectively and efficiently. Highlights include:

- RRPC is funded by performance and project contracts with federal, state, and local levels of government, organizations, and member municipalities with a budget of nearly \$1.5 million, including base funding from the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD).
- Successful completion of FY23 Financial and Final Reports, as well as semi-annual reports for ACCD; that included the status of performance measures, budget expenses, and other information.
- Leveraged ACCD funds to provide match and/or direct expenses for grants and agreements from VTrans, VT Dept. of Public Safety, VT Dept. of Health, and EPA as well as MPG and economic development work which enabled RRPC to cover costs incurred to expand work into diverse areas of planning.
- Completed FY22 Audit which resulted in no significant findings, material weaknesses, nor questioned costs were identified.
- Completed significant updates to the RRPC Bylaws, Employee Handbook, and Financial Policies to enhance planning services, increase organizational transparency, and improve employee recruitment and retention.
- Continued diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts by formally adopting a declaration of inclusion by the Board of Commissioners.
- Continued to serve as the lead RPC administering the ARPA and WQ 604b agreements for the other ten RPCs.
- Continued to expand outreach and engagement by developing a new RRPC website with the help of Group6 Interactive and creating new marketing materials with the help of Castleton University interns.

‘AT WORK’ MAP

The map depicting the range of services provided by the RRPC to member municipalities is included on the next page.

RRPC at Work: FY 2023



Projects

- Brownfields
- Clean Water
- Economic Development
- Energy Planning & Implementation
- Emergency Planning & Response
- Equity & Environmental Justice and Healthy Communities

- Grant Writing
- Housing
- Mapping
- Planning and Zoning
- Transportation Planning (including Bridge/Culvert Inventory, REI & Traffic Counts)

Designation

- Designated Downtown
- Designated Village

Municipal Bylaw Status

- Adopted
- Flood Only
- None

Municipal Plan Status

- Current
- No Town Plan

Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission

FY 2023 Annual Report

The Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) provides technical assistance to a 30-town area in east central Vermont. Our primary goals are to advocate for the needs of our member towns, and to articulate a vision for building a thriving and sustainable regional economy while enhancing the region's quality of life. TRORC staff provide technical services to local, state and federal levels of government and to the Region's non-profits and businesses.

PLANNING & ZONING

TRORC has a staff with more than 95 years of combined experience in Vermont providing technical assistance to towns. We act as a cost-effective professional planning staff for many of our municipalities under contract on developing plans, bylaws, capital budgets, and special projects. TRORC is a state-supported source of training and conducted 4 trainings this year. We also provide support for town planning staff, especially ad hoc questions from zoning administrators. TRORC conducts regional review of town plans on request, and this results in higher quality plans that are looking more closely at energy, utilities and facilities, and forest resources. Bylaw work this year was predominantly bylaw modernization to facilitate housing in core areas. All technical assistance provided this year is shown on the TRORC at Work map, but planning highlights include:

- TRORC provided technical assistance to 11 towns related to plan language.
 - Sharon, Braintree, Pomfret, Stockbridge, Barnard, Bradford, Pittsfield, Newbury, Woodstock, West Fairlee, and Topsham.
- TRORC provided technical assistance to 7 towns related to bylaws.
 - Thetford, Strafford, Hartford, Woodstock, Bethel, Rochester and Randolph.
 - TRORC hosted four training events on equity, forest blocks, capital budgeting, and zoning administration.

RPCs also coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan and related studies. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors.

- Regional Plan Implementation: TRORC used the Regional Plan to evaluate applications and participate in the Act 250 and Section 248 and 248a (power generation and cell towers) reviews of projects. In FY 23, only a few 248 applications were received, primarily for solar installations, and a few 248a applications for larger cell towers associated with FirstNet. None of these had major issues. A few ongoing Act 250 permits were followed, and TRORC retained counsel to file comments on two larger commercial proposals.
- Keys to the Valley: TRORC was involved from 2018-21 with two neighboring regional planning commissions (one of which is in NH) on a comprehensive study of housing needs and solutions in this 67-town area. This initiative is titled *Keys to the Valley*, and we are now in the implementation phase. We continue to talk and write about housing needs and help support several local housing groups. We helped produce a Home Creators Expo with partners in the Upper Valley and are working on updating the Keys website with information for developers.

BROWNFIELDS

Environmental site assessments remove concerns about contamination and allow properties to be sold and redeveloped in ways that benefit the local and state economy, create or protect jobs, provide greenspace, and increase housing opportunities. In FY 23, our previous EPA funding ran out, but we have successfully used state brownfields funding to carry forward assessment work on sites in Randolph, Fairlee, Rochester, and White River Junction. TRORC was awarded \$500,000 in EPA assessment funds this year and that project will begin in the fall of 2023.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are integrated with solid local planning. TRORC works with towns and in strong partnership with local and regional development groups to this end in a number of ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont for long term economic gain.

- TRORC continues to support the Cornerstone Creative Community of Vermont (3CVT) through the Zone Agent, helping to implement projects related to the creative economy. Through this effort, TRORC also serves on the statewide Vermont Creative Network as the RPC representative. Through an EDA grant that provides major funding for the creative economy and COVID-19 recovery, TRORC supported creative individuals and businesses in the East Central Vermont Economic Development District (ECVEDD). In the past year, TRORC hosted multiple trainings for creatives including "How to Market My Business", "Bookkeeping 101", "Grant Writing", and "Elevate My Brand", reaching over 80 people.
- Additionally, TRORC hosted four cross-sector events with regional partners to host events that combined the Creative Economy with Outdoor Recreation, Education, Health & Wellness, and Agriculture. These events included Bethel Trails Day, Wellness & Art Walk in White River Junction, Maple Open House Weekends in Woodstock, and a film series on education and immigration in White River Junction and Randolph. These events reached over 1,200 people and brought local and out of state tourism to our region's towns and creative businesses.
- TRORC continues to host 3CVT steering committee meetings and monitors a community discussion email list for creatives.
- TRORC continues to work with ECVEDD in supporting the implementation of the goals, strategies and actions of our federally approved Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

TRORC participates in the state's Transportation Planning Initiative, supporting local Selectboards and Road Foremen. Our work enables towns to get state and federal grants, manage local projects, and keeps them informed of state projects and initiatives. Our work is critical in creating local traffic counts, inventorying local systems such as culverts and sidewalks, and addressing water quality through ditching and stormwater. Our ongoing education and coordination mean that the region's road crews interact, are knowledgeable, and are supported during emergencies. This work has been especially important this year with local staff turnover.

Objective #1: Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions and Municipalities

Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) activity - Total of 5 meetings held, average member participation rate 40% (expressed as a % of total TAC membership)

TAC Outcomes

- TRORC participated in numerous policy stakeholder meetings as requested by VTrans and other agencies:
 - Continued as RPC rep for the VTrans VPSP2 core team (project prioritization revamping methodology).
 - Continued as Vermont Local Roads RPC rep on stakeholder committee (4 meetings).
- **Other Outreach** - 1 road foreman meeting, Public Transit E&D meetings (4 mtgs), 3 VTrans local community questionnaires (Hartland BR22, Chelsea BR46 and Bridgewater BR36), 1 Thetford-Lyme bridge with NHDOT/VTrans.
- **Data collection RPCs do for VTrans** – 60 Park & Ride (20 sites x 3x a year), 4 town Complete Streets form, 18 traffic counts, 7 bike ped count locations.

Objective #2: Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning

- **Participation in Project Development Activities** - Two project scoping efforts
- **Participation in Act 250 review related to transportation issues** - Royalton Dollar General
- **Be Municipal Project Managers for towns awarded federal transportation grants** –
 - Pittsfield - Salt Shed
 - Bridgewater - Sand Shed
 - Norwich - Tigertown Road Culverts
 - Hartland - 3 Corners Intersection Sidewalk
 - Royalton - Chelsea Business Block Sidewalk
 - Bethel - Pleasant St Sidewalk
 - Tunbridge - Village Scoping Study
 - Sharon - Village Scoping Study

Objective #3: Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities

- **Other Better Roads (BR) - related work** – 10 Better Road grant applications, 1 bike ped grant applications, 2 municipal mitigations, 2 TAP, 7 small scale HSIP, 12 District Structures/Roadway, 2 Safe Routes to School, 1 ACCD Downtown Transportation Fund - 37 applications
- **Participation in public transit efforts** – TRORC staff continued to participate in Tri-Valley Transit changed service routes reflected by mapping technical assistance and participated in TVT's Bradford Bus Barn planning efforts. Staff involved in TVT Operations Committee discussion and TVT microtransit study area discussion. Staff looping in public transit for various VTrans construction projects on impacts to transit service. Staff assisted Town of Fairlee on bus shelter grant when met with historic preservation challenges.
- **Municipal Staff training on transportation grants** - with significant turnover in road foreman staff and town Administrative Assistants in last 3 years, we have met with new staff to

onboard and introduce our transportation technical assistance resource and grant opportunities.

- **Continued to provide VTrans Grants in Aid Technical Assistance to towns** (scoping ditching projects out, filling out preconstruction paperwork, taking pre and post construction photos, assisting towns with reimbursement, and most recently advocating to VTrans for grant extensions for towns impacted by the flooding event).

EMERGENCY PLANNING & RESPONSE

TRORC plays key roles in the mitigation, preparedness, and recovery phases of local emergency management in partnership with Vermont Emergency Management, VTrans and the Agency of Natural Resources. TRORC annually supports our 30 municipalities in updates to their Local Emergency Management Plans (LEMPs). LEMPs are critical documents that the state and others use to contact towns in disasters, and also contain information that communities use for their own emergency actions. TRORC also provides direct staff to the State Emergency Operations Center during times of disaster, helps update floodplain bylaws, writes FEMA-required hazard mitigation plans, and helps communities access grant funds. TRORC staff support a Regional Emergency Management Committee that is a venue for the region's responder and emergency managers to meet. TRORC also continued its role in the Flood Resilient Communities Fund program, and finished two videos on flood buyouts and river restoration projects.

TRORC staff are ready to step into the Local Liaison role when tasked by VEM to poll towns for disaster damage in the wake of incidents, and were tasked this year to respond in a later winter flash freeze. TRORC has a very good working relationship with our VTrans Districts, river engineers, and road foremen, and coordinates with them in times when road damages are expected.

Though just after the 2023 fiscal year ended, severe flooding began to hit the region on July 4 and continued with several storms. TRORC staff worked with VTrans and did field assessments of town road damage, augmenting local road crews that were so busy with repairs they barely had time to report damage. We worked with local zoning administrators on flood repair permitting and coordinated with ANR River Engineers so that any work in streams was getting the state permitting it needed. TRORC staff also worked at the State Emergency Operations Center during the major flooding on July 10, and later as GIS staff. Staff spent considerable time helping communities and residents report damage, and then access FEMA funding. The TRORC website has a new flood page added with many helpful links. TRORC shared its past expertise on flood buyouts with several agencies and the media.

MAPPING

In addition to enhancing the RPC work, RPCs provide municipalities, state agencies and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of their projects. This work included:

- Produced custom maps for town requests (energy, watershed/natural resource, forest blocks, road name, infrastructure atlases etc.).

- Managed ArcGIS Online portal with several custom web maps (energy, regional plan, flooding).
- Updated town plan maps and zoning maps.
- Supported town asset inventories (culvert, road erosion).
- Supported parcel mapping with town outreach.
- Uploaded updated town zoning layers to VCGI portal.
- Completed Hazard Mitigation Plan analysis and maps.
- Act 174 renewable energy generation maps.

ENERGY PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION

TRORC supports state and local efforts to transition to renewable, sustainable, and affordable energy sources, as well as integrating energy planning with land use, transportation and natural resources efforts. TRORC has an Intermunicipal Regional Energy Coordinator (IREC) that is contracted to work with six towns on implementing their energy plans. The IREC position is supported by town appropriations and TRORC funding, and has collected baseline energy and greenhouse gas emissions data, set up energy audits in municipal buildings, developed energy-related zoning regulations and policies, and is working on implementation of projects.

Current projects include upgrading the Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) units in a number of IREC member municipal buildings and replacing outdated lighting with modern, efficient LED lighting. These projects will reduce reliance on fossil fuels, increase the efficiency of buildings' heating and cooling systems, incorporate HVAC zones to optimize occupant comfort, include modern controls that allow remote operation and monitoring, and significantly reduce the operating and energy costs of the buildings.

This year, TRORC added staffing to support the new Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP), and has worked with all of our towns to help them access the program's mini-grants, schedule state funded energy assessments of town buildings, and gather building documentation so that towns can apply for energy efficiency and weatherization grants available through the MERP. To date, TRORC has directly assisted 20 towns who have, or will soon receive, mini-grants of \$4,000 each, representing \$80,000 in funding. So far, six TRORC towns are scheduled to receive detailed energy assessments that could qualify them for significant additional funding.

Our energy program also helps support placement of EV charging stations and the creation of community solar projects. TRORC provided training on the Residential Building Energy Standards, reviews all solar projects undergoing state review, and provides a regional determination of energy compliance for town plans that meet state criteria.

CLEAN WATER

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to assist with completion of the EPA required watershed plans. TRORC continues to play an active role in commenting on water quality initiatives by the state, as well as promoting high quality waters through basin planning processes. We have remained active in ANR's tactical basin planning processes and have supported the implementation of water quality initiatives. TRORC works with towns to identify infrastructure and properties vulnerable to flooding and/or fluvial erosion, and supports local Flood Bylaw administration with our

in-house Certified Flood Managers. TRORC coordinated ARPA stormwater and other potential flood resilience projects. TRORC supported FEMA remapping in the White River, Ompompanoosuc, Waits, Wells, and Ottauquechee River Watersheds.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

- TRORC has continued to partner with the Mt. Ascutney Prevention Partnership (MAPP) in working with communities on policies that focus on healthy communities. TRORC also continues to share our health chapter template with planning commissions, select boards, and other Upper Valley health groups. Though not required by statute, TRORC has a health chapter in our Regional Plan.
- TRORC continued to provide support to communities on the use of ARPA funds.
- TRORC worked to help communities address their new responsibilities regarding cannabis-related businesses.
- TRORC finished the rollout and administration of a statewide emergency grant program to assist sole proprietors negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and provided small technical support grants for bookkeeping, websites, and marketing to 46 small businesses. TRORC's service area covered Windsor, Orange, Caledonia, Essex, Orleans, Franklin, Chittenden, and Grand Isle Counties.

ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING

TRORC is funded by performance and project contracts with federal, state and local levels of government, foundation support, and contributions from member municipalities and non-profits. TRORC's FY 23 budget was approximately \$2 million. Base state planning funding from the Property Transfer Tax passed through to us by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development leverages over three times as much additional funding (primarily from federal sources) that we use to address the needs of citizens, businesses, and communities in the TRORC region. TRORC's non-profit arm complements and furthers the work of TRORC by being able to access philanthropic funding.

TRORC always has a Single Audit conducted by an independent Certified Public Accounting firm and has numerous field audits and reviews by funders. No significant findings, material weaknesses, nor questioned costs were identified this year. Staff continuously avail themselves of professional development opportunities on program and administrative areas.







TRORC serves 30 municipalities and operates with a Board of Directors that develop and implement policy and oversee a staff of 11. The Board systematically updates all accounting practices and safeguards and organizational policies on an ongoing basis.






'AT WORK' MAP

The map depicting the range of services provided by the TRORC to member municipalities is included on the next page.




TRORC at Work: FY 2023

Projects



-  Brownfields
-  Clean Water
-  Economic Development
-  Energy Planning & Implementation
-  Emergency Planning & Response
-  Equity & Environmental Justice and Healthy Communities

-  Grant Writing
-  Housing
-  Mapping
-  Planning and Zoning
-  Transportation Planning (including Bridge/Culvert Inventory, REI & Traffic Counts)

Designation

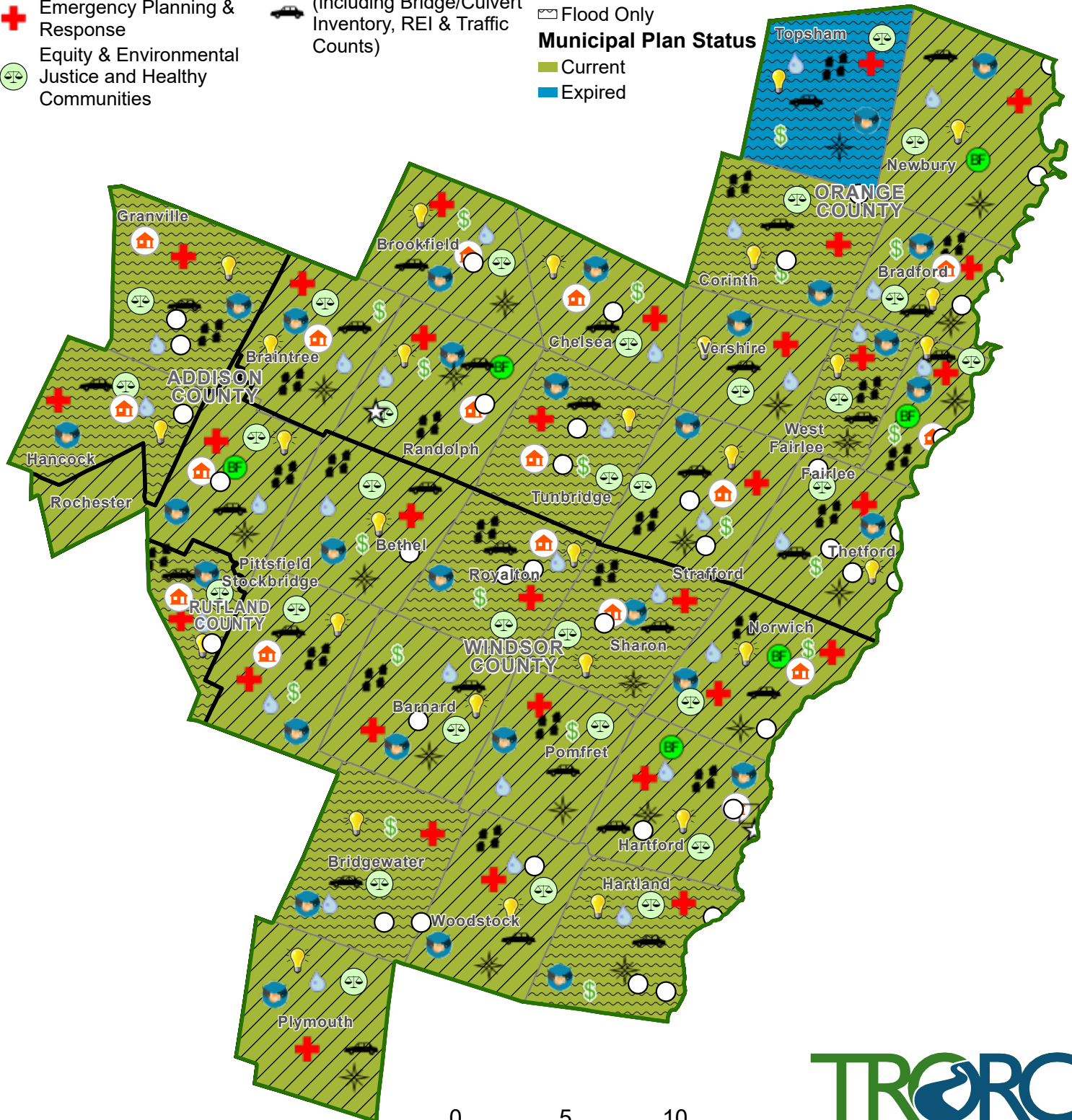
-  Designated Downtown
-  Designated Village
-  Designated Growth Center

Municipal Bylaw Status

-  Adopted
-  Flood Only

Municipal Plan Status

-  Current
-  Expired



0 5 10 Miles

Windham Regional Commission

FY 2023 Annual Report

Celebrating our 58th year, the Windham Regional Commission (WRC) is an important resource to 27 towns in southeast Vermont, including all of the towns of Windham County, the towns of Readsboro, Searsburg, and Winhall in Bennington County, and Weston in Windsor County. In the absence of county government we are an essential link between local, state, and federal government. Our mission is to assist towns in Southeastern Vermont to provide effective local governance and work collaboratively with them to address regional issues.

Each town's Selectboard determines who will represent the town on the WRC. Each member town can appoint two [commissioners](#) who represent that town's interest in regional affairs. The exception is Somerset, where a town supervisor is appointed by the Governor. Additionally, the WRC has up to ten citizen interest [commissioners](#) who represent other regional interests such as business and industry, healthy communities, agriculture, natural resources, energy, and housing. The WRC is organized around a strong committee structure. These [committees](#) are where most of the work gets done and the decisions made. Commissioners serve on these committees and make the decisions. The WRC has 11 highly-qualified [staff](#) who provide support to the committees, and execute the Commission's [program of work](#).

PLANNING & ZONING

RPCs act as a cost-effective professional planning and plan implementation staff in support of many of Vermont's municipalities. Work in recent years has been focused on improving town plans and local permitting through education, municipal consultation, bylaw modernization, and implementing new requirements for housing, flood resiliency, forest blocks and habitat connectivity, energy, and water quality planning. Current and clear plans and bylaws are essential to smooth state and local permitting. We also recognize that local planning and zoning administration capacity seems to be diminishing, and that intermunicipal approaches may be not only desirable but necessary.

RPCs also coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan, and related plans and studies such as the regional energy plan and regional transportation plan. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors. RPC's planning and zoning work is supported through local and regional planning funds, local contributions, and other grants. The technical assistance and regional planning provided this year is shown on the At Work map; some highlights were:

- Provided assistance to towns in updating and adopting town plans (7 towns) and land use regulations (4 towns). This included work on town plans, zoning bylaws, and flood hazard area regulations. Updating town plans included assisting towns with addressing Act 174 enhanced energy planning standards and associated requirements, Act 171 planning standards for

protection of forest blocks and habitat connectors, updating community data, and procedural questions. Updating bylaws involved assisting towns with amendments to increase housing opportunities, updating flood hazard area regulations, including protection of river corridors, and administration and enforcement of such regulations.

- Provided general technical assistance to 18 towns on topics including Chapter 117 statutory processes and requirements, Act 171 (forest blocks and habitat connectors), Act 174 (energy planning), and general administration and enforcement of land use regulations.
- Worked with one town on a new Village Center designation application.
- Offered virtual regional trainings on Basics of Land Use Planning and Regulation. Provided customized presentations for Planning Commissions and others, e.g., Selectboard and Zoning Board of Adjustment or Development Review Board members as requested.
- Hosted “Getting to Know Act 250” presentation with the Vermont Natural Resources Board.
- Conducted 10 municipal consultations with town Planning Commissions and others to discuss town planning, regional planning commission review and approval of town plans and confirmation of towns’ planning processes, and regional commission programs and assistance to towns.
- Assisted 5 towns in developing and submitting Municipal Planning Grants, Bylaw Modernization Grants, and other grant applications for town planning, zoning, flood resilience, and community development projects.
- WRC was contracted by the towns of Westminster, Dover, and Weston to complete Town Plan updates for these communities with funds received through the Municipal Planning Grants program.
- WRC was contracted by the towns of Wilmington and Newfane to make recommendations on updates to zoning bylaws to support additional housing opportunities with funds received through the Bylaw Modernization Grant program.
- Worked with the towns of Londonderry and Grafton providing project coordination services and community engagement for Village Wastewater and Water Supply grants.
- Continued to work with towns to advise them on use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and annual reporting requirements.
- WRC continued to work on updating the Windham Regional Plan. The plan will focus on how to support compact development in our village centers and downtown areas, how to make settlements more climate adaptive and resilient, and how to maintain and improve habitat connectivity within the region. The update process will take approximately two years with the goal of adopting a final plan in summer 2024. The updated regional plan will be entirely web-based and the WRC has hired a consultant to assist with the design and development of the website that will host the plan. The purpose behind this is to provide communities with a more accessible and useful planning tool and source of information.
- Project Review - During this reporting period the WRC reviewed 11 Act 250 applications and 5 Section 248 applications. The latter included two solar projects, one small wind project, and

two substation upgrades. Act 250 applications included those related to Mount Snow Resort, small businesses in Guilford and Halifax, Sugar Mountain Holdings in Dummerston, a green cemetery proposed in Newfane, a boathouse in Dummerston, and quarries in Londonderry.

- WRC is following the decommissioning and site restoration of the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station and actively participating as a member of the Vermont Nuclear Decommissioning Citizen Advisory Panel.

BROWNFIELDS

- The WRC [brownfields program](#), since its inception in 2000, has brought a total of \$7.7 million dollars in federal brownfields funds to the region for assessment and cleanup of brownfields sites. In 2023, we received an additional \$2 million in cleanup funds to supplement our Revolving Loan Fund, as well as an additional \$500,000 in assessment funds from EPA. We also received an additional \$50,000 in assessment funds from the state.
- Participated in the Technical Assistance Program awarded from EPA which looked at next steps for the Bellows Falls Island and Under the Hill Area.
- During this past year WRC Brownfields program has worked on the following sites:

Site	Town/Village	Brownfields Work	Reuse plan
21 O'Bryan Dr.	Brattleboro	Phase II and disposal of waste complete.	Reuse plan for industrial development.
Bellows Falls Bike Project	Bellows Falls	Phase II complete and ECAA/CAP additional testing underway.	Nonprofit Bike Project plans to purchase site for continued use.
Bellows Falls Train Station	Bellows Falls	Approved cleanup funds. Developing cooperative agreement.	Plan to continue to use the building as a train and bus station with the addition of a café or brewery.
BMAC/11 Arch St.	Brattleboro	Historic documentation underway. Archeological monitoring and cleanup complete.	Plan is to cleanup the site and building in preparation of BMAC expansion.
Foodworks	Brattleboro	Phase I underway.	Nonprofit Groundworks plans to purchase site for continued use as food shelf.
The Garage	Bellows Falls	Final cleanup actions complete and new affordable housing constructed. Offsite vapor plume delineation underway.	New construction of affordable housing.

Glen Mtn. and Black Mtn. Parks	Brattleboro	Phase I's completed this year.	Continued use as mobile home parks.
Site	Town/Village	Brownfields Work	Reuse plan
NEYT Arts Campus - 48/64 Elm St.	Brattleboro	Final cleanup steps underway.	Redevelopment by New England Youth Theatre for additional outdoor space.
Penta/Wyman Flint	Bellows Falls	Partial Phase II complete.	Plan to redevelop site for CT River Heritage Center.
S. Newfane Store	Newfane	Phase I underway.	Restore greenspace as part of FEMA buyout.
Thermal House	Brattleboro	Hazardous Building Materials Assessment, CAP and Pilot testing underway.	Redevelopment for maple syrup warehouse and distribution facility.
Tri Park	Brattleboro	Phase I completed this year.	Plan to continue to use the site as a mobile home park and move homes out of the floodplain.
Winston Prouty	Brattleboro	Phase I and Site Investigation complete.	Plan to develop parts of site for new housing.
WW Building Supply	Wilmington	Phase I underway.	Prospective purchaser, WheelPad, plans to use site to assemble accessible mobile units.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with solid planning. RPCs work with towns and in strong partnership with Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) to this end in a number of ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help position Vermont for long-term economic gain.

- Engaged in the creation of the U.S. Economic Development Administration-recognized Southern Vermont Economic District.
- Participated on Southeastern Economic Development Strategies (SeVEDS) Board and the development of the Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone.
- Participated on the Welcoming Communities Challenge Project led by the Brattleboro Development Credit Corp. and funded by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.
- Participated on the Downtown Brattleboro Alliance Executive Committee.
- Participated on the Southeastern Vermont Housing Coalition and Planning Committee.
- Continued working with the U.S. Economic Development Administration, the Nuclear Decommissioning Collaborative, and the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation to explore potential qualifying uses of federal funding to mitigate nuclear plant closures on the

local economy. The narrow scope of eligible projects and the time that has passed since the closure of Vermont Yankee has made successful applications challenging.

- Working with Winston Prouty Center, located on the former Austine School for the Deaf, and the adjoining Omega Optical campus in Brattleboro in a community planning effort to explore the development of a new neighborhood that could host 300-500 new homes.
- Continuing to provide support to towns as they deliberate on the needs and potential benefits of community water and wastewater systems. Working directly with the towns of Londonderry and Grafton in support of their wastewater grants.
- Have been active at the state level in advocacy for state support for community water and wastewater systems in order to retain existing homes and businesses in villages and to make compact settlement possible per state, regional, and municipal policy.
- Continue to assist Windham Region communities with village center and downtown designation applications.
- Participated in the Windham Regional Healthy Seniors project, designed to consider the future of senior living in the region.
- Continue to participate on the Windham County Economic Development Program Committee.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Through contract with the VTrans, RPCs coordinate the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort has provided a statewide framework for public involvement in planning the improvements to Vermont's transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the state's transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state, and federal transportation network advancement.

The following five categories are performance measures reported to VTrans as part of their report to the legislature.

Objective #1: Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions, and Municipalities

- Held 6 TAC meetings. Engaged 5 non-municipal TAC member actively in transportation planning. The number of TAC meetings was reduced due to response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Actively engaged 26 municipalities in transportation planning.
- Coordinated 11 RPC activities with municipalities and VTrans.

Objective # 2: Better Connect Federal, Regional, and Statewide Transportation Planning

- Regional transportation plan is current (within 8 years).
- Coordinated 3 activities in support of regional public transit providers.
- Staff participated on 1 VTrans committees.
- Participated in Project Prioritization.

Objective # 3: Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities

- Assisted 11 municipalities with transportation-related grants.
- Spent 68% of budget on municipal technical assistance.
- Conducted 3 municipal transportation inventories.
- Assisted 4 municipalities with transportation element of municipal/town plan.
- Conducted 2 road erosion inventories in support of the municipal road general permit using TPI dollars and other funding sources.
- Serving as Municipal Project Manager (not using TPI funds) for Newfane sidewalk scoping study, and the Rockingham Atkinson and School street intersection improvement scoping study.

Objective # 4: Deliver Results that Advance VTrans Strategic and Long-Range Transportation Plans

- Performed 78 data collection activities specifically for VTrans.

Objective # 5: Provide a Mechanism for Improved Public Outreach and Education

- Participated in conjunction with the Southwest Regional Planning Commission in New Hampshire for the development of a vision for future use of the existing Charles Dana and Anna Hunt Marsh bridges and the Hinsdale Island.
- Coordinated with SWRPC and Windham Region Legislators on community concerns regarding Route 119 in Hinsdale relevant to the Windham Region.
- Together with Mt. Ascutney Regional Commission and Southeast Vermont Transit continued to support our regional Elders and Persons with Disabilities Transportation program to provide on demand transportation for seniors and persons with disabilities to medical appointments, shopping, meals, and social engagements.
- Coordinated regional outreach for the VTrans Project Selection & Prioritization Pilot to allow municipalities to submit local infrastructure projects for consideration from VTrans.
- Coordinated with VTrans on outreach for the Transportation Equity Framework and hosted VTrans staff at the Windham Region Transportation Committee to discuss their work.
- Facilitated the transition of the Windham Regional Transportation Committee to a Transportation Advisory Committee.
- Worked with the Windham Aging Project on the development of the transportation section of the Windham County Aging Action Plan and coordinated meetings between the group and VTrans staff.

- Coordinated with DEC on outreach on proposed new rules for vehicle electrification and participated in a public meeting discussing new rules at the Rockingham Town Hall.
- WRC serves on the board of Southeast Vermont Transit.

Highlights

- WRC continues to support the road foremen in the region. One aspect of this support is loading data and apps onto tablets for use by highway departments, and providing training, for the towns of Grafton, Readsboro, Stratton, and Westminster.
- WRC provided outreach and assistance to 17 towns for the Grants in Aid Equipment Grant program, which provided 80% funding for the purchase of a hydroseeder, stone screener, leaf blower, plate compactor, or hay bale shredder.
- GIS staff spent a great deal of time in support of the Municipal Roads Grants in Aid program, working with nearly all our towns on their construction projects that bring road segments into compliance for the Municipal Roads General Permit.
- Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridge Scenario Planning - The Hinsdale/Brattleboro Existing Bridge Subcommittee is tasked with identifying a vision for the reuse of the existing Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridges. The purpose of the Existing Bridges Subcommittee "is to develop a vision for the Charles Dana and Anna Hunt Marsh Bridges and Hinsdale Island, including the envisioned activities and uses of the bridges and island, physical changes, management and maintenance considerations, and expected impacts on economic development, tourism, transportation/access, and recreational opportunities."
- Vilas Bridge Community Connections – Continued support for conversations between the Town of Rockingham in Vermont and the Town of Walpole in New Hampshire, in collaboration with our counterpart in New Hampshire, the Southwest Region Planning Commission.
- Rockingham Atkinson Street-School Street intersection improvement Scoping Study-The WRC serves as the project manager for the Rockingham Atkinson Street-School Street intersection improvement scoping study. Funded by the VTrans Transportation Alternatives program, the study examines potential safety and efficiency improvements for bicycle, pedestrians and motorists at the intersection of Atkinson and School streets in the Bellows Falls village. This will improve pedestrian connectivity and safety at a busy intersection in the region's most populous village, including for students, parents and teachers at the nearby Bellows Falls Elementary and Middle Schools.
- Newfane Village Sidewalk Scoping Study – The WRC serves as the project manager for the Newfane Village Sidewalk Scoping Study. Funded by a VTrans Bicycle and Pedestrian program grant, the study examines the possibility for sidewalk extension and improvements along Route 30 in Newfane, along with the possibility for new pedestrian crossings in the Village. The study will help improve pedestrian connectivity and safety along one of the Windham Region's busiest state highways and allow the town to apply for a construction grant from VTrans in the future.

- The Windham Regional Commission assisted 12 towns in applying for grants from 7 different transportation related grant programs, including Transportation Alternatives grants for Rockingham, Athens and Londonderry, Better Roads grants for Halifax, Wilmington and Windham and a Municipal Highway and Stormwater Mitigation grant in Wardsboro.

EMERGENCY PLANNING & RESPONSE

RPCs play a key role in the mitigation and preparedness phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont Emergency Management, the Vermont Homeland Security Unit, VTrans, and the Agency of Natural Resources. RPCs also help update floodplain bylaws and hazard mitigation plans, coordinate updates to municipal emergency plans, and serve as local liaisons between towns and the State Emergency Operations Center in hazard events like Tropical Storm Irene and the Covid-19 pandemic.

- WRC's Executive Director coordinates closely with VEM through his role as the Chair of the Emergency Planning Committee of VAPDA in addition to serving on the Vermont Individual and Family Needs Recovery Task Force
- WRC's Emergency Planner serves as the Regional Planning Commission Representative on the Steering Committee for the update of the Statewide Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- Preparations, training outreach, and information sharing underway with towns regarding the 2024 statewide catastrophic exercise, Binary Blizzard.
- Initial data gathering and town education around the updating of flood hazard bylaws in conjunction with expected new FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps.
- The WRC is partnering with GMP on the pilot Windham Region Energy Resiliency Zone planning project which will develop local grid resiliency projects for 7 targeted towns.
- The WRC develops local hazard mitigation plans for our towns, with the exception of Brattleboro, which maintains its own. Staff capacity for this work has increased to 4 staff.
- Assisted towns with the annual update of their Local Emergency Management Plans.
- WRC staffs the Regional Emergency Management Committee, which holds quarterly meetings for Emergency Management Directors (EMDs) and others actively involved in emergency management. Topics are chosen by the participating members.
- Following any significant event, WRC serves in a liaison role to collect damage information from towns for VEM to use in determining whether to seek a Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration. This was done for two events this year. WRC staff, in conjunction with the regional ANR River Management Engineers and VTrans Districts 1 and 2, have in place a damage reporting/situational awareness protocol that expedites the gathering of accurate information from towns with the goal of minimizing duplicate requests for information. That protocol is kept updated and shared with new staff members that have a liaison support role.

- WRC has a WRC Emergency Planning Committee. The group is available to assist staff with local liaison needs during large events.
- WRC holds and arranges for trainings, exercises and meetings for EMDs and Floodplain Administrators assist in their continued learning and engagement in those local roles.
- WRC maintains a Certified Floodplain Manager on staff who works with interested towns on developing updated flood hazard bylaws, which incorporate state-designated river corridors.
- WRC supports the development of grant applications to FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities grant, and VEM's Flood Resilient Communities Fund. There are several active applications and grant funded projects in the region currently.
- WRC staff participated in numerous FEMA sponsored trainings as part of the State Emergency Operations Center training program.
- Staff attended the annual Vermont Emergency Management conference.

MAPPING

In addition to enhancing the RPC work, RPCs provide municipalities, state agencies, and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of their projects. In many cases the maps you see in town offices and garages were produced by the WRC.

- GIS staff provided support to the Transportation Planning Initiative for data collection activities, which included culvert inventories, sign inventories, parking inventories, traffic counts, park and ride counts, and bike/ped counts.
- Continued our effort to study bike parking in downtown Brattleboro, and began in Bellows Falls, by conducting an inventory of bike racks, and on one day each month of bikes parked in the downtown district.
- Town plan maps were updated for Readsboro, and are in the process of being updated for Rockingham.
- GIS staff continues to provide support for transportation-related inventory and mapping work. We updated culvert inventories and/or maps for Brookline, Dover, and Guilford and continued to provide training and outreach to towns on how to use the new VtCulverts tool to both view and manage their culvert data.
- Many town highway departments are starting to use tablets for map access in the field. WRC has worked closely with towns, setting up tablets and training staff to be able to update culvert data, Municipal Roads General Permit status. Towns include Dover, Grafton, Halifax, Marlboro, Newfane, Readsboro, Rockingham, Stratton, Westminster, and Wilmington.
- Support for towns as they continue to work on compliance with Vermont's Municipal Roads General Permit has been ongoing, including outreach on the newly revised permit. We began working with Halifax to develop a plan to address their Very High Priority road segments, and continued to provide assistance to towns on their Grants in Aid projects.

- WRC continues efforts to provide support for our communities regarding trails and recreation paths. We are creating a map for the Grafton Village Park, updated maps of the Retreat Trails and West River Trail, and participated on the Velomont/Vermont Huts steering committee. We provided support to Londonderry as they created a map and brochure of trails, and posted trail information on TrailFinder.
- WRC provides mapping support to towns and non-profit organizations when they apply for various grants, including VTrans Better Roads Grants (Halifax, Stratton, Wilmington, and Windham) and Federal Lands Access Program grants (Stratton).
- WRC conducted 37 pedestrian counts in 8 towns. We continued to conduct counts to coincide with the dates and locations of counts from previous years.
- WRC continued to conduct bicycle counts on state and town highways and multi-use pathways, in six towns (Brattleboro, Dover, Londonderry, Newfane, Putney, and Vernon).
- WRC conducted 13 traffic studies in seven towns this year. These studies are usually done to get information on traffic speed and/or traffic volume.
- Staff created an updated E911 map of Jamaica.

ENERGY PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION

A renewed focus on clean, renewable, sustainable, and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunity and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation, and natural resources planning, and work with municipalities to assist with project implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process.

- WRC is assisting 35 municipalities in the Windham Region with the Municipal Energy Resilience Program (Act 172) that launched in early 2023. This program has been of significant interest to municipalities as they look to both provide education around energy resiliency, conduct municipal energy audits and eventually complete implementation work on needed energy resiliency projects in municipal buildings.
- The WRC has continued to work with public serving institutions as they transition to wood heat through the Windham Wood Heat Initiative. In the past year, the program worked with one municipality on evaluating the installation of an advanced wood heating system. WRC also finalized an external evaluation program looking at fuel savings, lessons learned, and recommendation for future project. This program has been a tremendous success and WRC is pleased to be a part of the transition for many public buildings to a cleaner source of heating. The funding for this \$1.6 million project is through the Clean Energy Development Fund (CEDF), which was made possible through the state's settlement agreement with Entergy Vermont Yankee.
- The WRC worked with Town Energy Committees throughout the region. Regional Energy Committee gatherings are held to share information and collaborate on common

weatherization projects. This regional forum will continue to be a support system for our Energy Committees.

- WRC continues to support towns with updating their Energy Chapters in the Town Plan or updating their Enhanced Energy Plans. In the past year, one new town has begun work on creating an Enhanced Energy Plan.
- WRC hosted informational programs throughout the year in collaboration with the Vermont Department of Public Service.

CLEAN WATER

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to implement the state's Clean Water Initiative through basin planning and assistance to municipalities in meeting statutory and regulatory requirements. RPCs also work with municipalities and watershed organizations to implement river corridor assessments in local planning and regulations which result in better and safer growth management decisions. The WRC has gone a step further in organizing community efforts to connect people with their watersheds, and to create watershed "identities."

- Stormwater Master Planning is currently being conducted in four communities in the Windham Region. WRC continues to assist in the development of these plans as input is needed.
- WRC is continuing to work with the Town of Dover, Mount Snow, ANR, the Connecticut River Conservancy and others to remove the Snow Lake impoundment at Mount Snow and restore the natural flow of the north branch of the Deerfield River.
- WRC is working in collaboration with the Town of Rockingham, private businesses, VTTrans and the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation to address stormwater runoff issues in an industrial zone. This work has led to the identification of three additional stormwater gullies that WRC has begun working with the Town of Rockingham to communicate with landowners and develop stormwater projects to restore the washouts and reduce the effects of stormwater runoff.
- The WRC is concluding its administrative role with the Green River Watershed Alliance with an eye towards transitioning the organization into self-administration. This alliance, with support of the High Meadows Fund and VT DEC Watershed grants, addresses environmental issues, watershed study, place-based education, and ecological restoration within the Green River Watershed. The work of the Alliance highlights the importance of watershed awareness in the Green River watershed for water quality and flood resilience.
- Participated in various collaborative watershed efforts, including:
 - Supported the Deerfield River Watershed Alliance in their efforts to nominate the Deerfield River and its tributaries as a federally designated Wild and Scenic River.
 - Worked with the Green River Watershed Alliance to connect the organization to resources and contacts in the Massachusetts portion of the watershed to begin a

united collaboration to promote watershed education and protection throughout the entire watershed.

- Hosted water quality public meetings for the East Putney & Sackett's Brooks and the Deerfield River in partnership with the Connecticut River Conservancy.
- Worked with the Connecticut River Joint Commission's (CRJC) Wantastiquet Local River Subcommittee to link and represent Connecticut River towns to relevant planning issues along the River. WRC continues to serve on the CRJC Full Commission and serves as an officer on the Vermont Commission.
- WRC works with the Connecticut River Conservancy and Deerfield Watershed Alliance to promote water monitoring results for major rivers and tributaries throughout the region.
- The WRC is the municipal project manager for 3 salt shed projects and 2 culvert replacement project in the region. These transportation related projects all have significant water quality benefits and advance the goals in our region to have more resilient infrastructure in place that also keeps containments out of the region's waterways.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

- WRC is collaborating with the other RPCs and VDH on a health equity and municipal planning project. This project will look at the connection between health disparities and the built environment, and the role towns can play in addressing these issues. The project will include the development of a health equity planning toolkit for municipalities and WRC will be working with towns in the region on implementation projects.
- WRC collaborated with Green Mountain Power to secure Congressionally Directed Spending through Senator Sanders in support of the creation of electricity resiliency zones. This project will focus on 6 towns identified by Green Mountain Power as having relatively high community risk in the event of power outages. Resiliency zones will use renewable energy generation and storage to enable communities to continue to have electrical service in the event of a grid outage. The WRC will work with towns to identify the parameters of these zones and their locations.
- Executive Director Chris Campany was appointed to the Vermont Climate Council to represent municipal interests. He served on the Council Steering Committee, Just Transitions Subcommittee, Cross Sector Mitigation Subcommittee, and Transportation Task Group.
- The WRC received funding from the High Meadows Fund (HMF) to support the Windham Connectivity Collaborative, which is focused on policies and implementation strategies to maintain and improve habitat connectivity at the scale of the Windham Region as a whole, and within what we're calling the "southeast connector" which includes towns in the southeastern quadrant of the region. The WRC's partners in this effort include local municipal conservation commissions and their volunteers, the Vermont Land Trust, Windham County Forester, Vermont Fish and Wildlife, VT Coverts, Windham County Natural Resources

Conservation District, and the Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center. This work is an ongoing initiative beyond the term of the funding from the HMF.

- WRC continues to make the case at the Federal level for the substantive inclusion of host communities in the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s policymaking process that is creating nuclear power plant decommissioning policy, as well as the U.S. Department of Energy’s consideration of a consent-based spent fuel and high-level radioactive waste siting initiative.
- WRC is a national leader in understanding the importance and impact of nuclear plant decommissioning and its impact on host communities, and continues to participate in the Nuclear Decommissioning Collaborative in an advisory capacity. The purpose of the collaborative is to help mitigate the economic impact of nuclear plant closures. We have participated as subject matter experts in a number of national workshops and webinars on the subject.

REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION RESPONSE TO JULY 2023 FLOODS

- Three WRC staff served in a liaison function between the towns and the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC). This role involved collecting damage information by specified times and inputting that data into WebEOC, the SEOC reporting mechanism. Town requests and needs were forwarded to the SEOC for action consideration.
- RPC staff were assigned activation roles in the SEOC for several weeks following the event. This assignment was especially placed on RPC GIS staff as that capacity is limited within VEM.
- RPCs collectively passed along FEMA and State guidelines to towns that assisted in their following necessary rules in cleanup and recovery efforts to ensure maximum reimbursement potential.
- RPC staff worked to maximize town Emergency Relief Assistance Fund rates for their member towns.
- RPCs assisted as requested in Substantial Damage Estimates on-the-ground with local zoning officials and ANR. Staff continues to be available for technical assistance questions related to the permitting needs of rebuilding.
- RPC staff attended FEMA Applicant Briefings to learn the latest public assistance applicant process and be able to answer questions of towns in an ongoing capacity.
- RPC staff encouraged towns to outreach to impacted property owners about buyouts and shared how to input interested properties to VEM’s collection tool.

ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING

Virtually all of the WRC’s revenue sources are tied to contracts with scopes of work, guidelines, and/or performance measures. This means that the WRC has limited control over how it chooses to use the vast majority of its funding. Funding received through town assessments is the exception,

which makes this funding stream particularly important because it gives us the greatest latitude to respond to WRC-identified needs in the region. Town assessments, and the funding received through the WRC's performance contract with the state, are also necessary to provide matching funds required by grantors. The grants we receive enable us to work with our towns on areas such as transportation, emergency planning, community development, brownfields redevelopment, energy, and natural resources. Revenue from virtually all federal and state grantors requires matching funds, and typically non-federal matching funds. Required match ranges from 10 percent (Transportation Planning Initiative) to 50 percent (Emergency Management Planning Grant). Our budget and work program is available on our [About the WRC page](#) on our website.

The WRC has an audit on an annual basis, and a single audit as required by Federal rules.

The WRC has adopted a [Municipal Services Policy](#) that is intended to provide guidance for the Commission in the delivery of professional services to member municipalities. It describes technical assistance available to member towns as part of the commission's core activities, and the opportunities for expanded service when funded as a special project.

'AT WORK' MAP

A map depicting the range of services provided by the WRC to member municipalities is included on the next page.

WRC at Work: FY 2023

Projects

- Brownfields
- Clean Water
- Economic Development
- Energy Planning & Implementation
- Emergency Planning & Response
- Grant Writing
- Housing
- Mapping
- Planning and Zoning
- Transportation Planning (including Bridge/Culvert Inventory, REI & Traffic Counts)

Designation

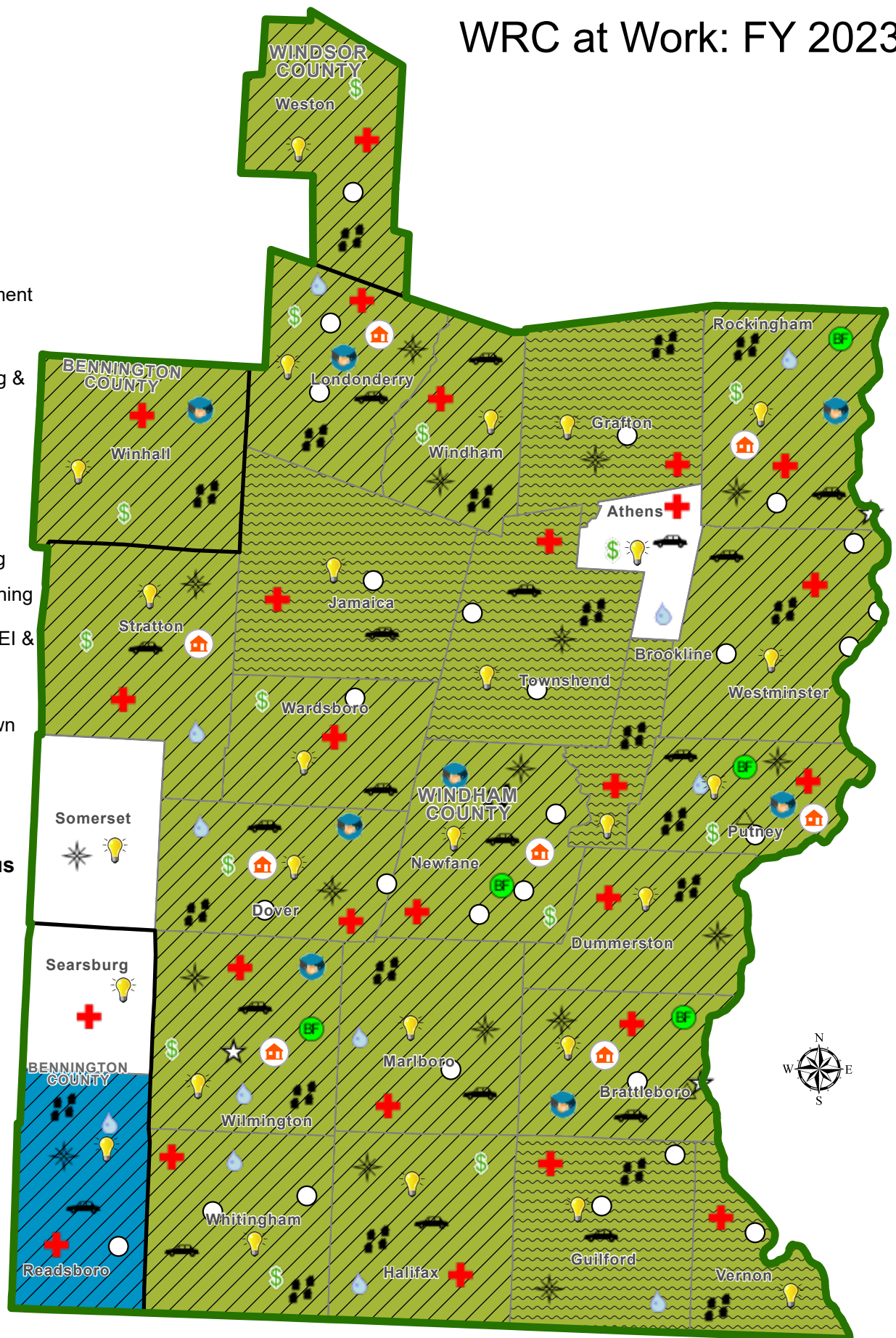
- Designated Downtown
- Designated Village
- Neighborhood Development Area
- County Boundary

Municipal Bylaw Status

- Adopted
- Flood Only
- None

Municipal Plan Status

- Current
- Expired
- No Town Plan



0 5 10 Miles